ELNATHAN.

A ROMANCE.

Lane, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall Street.

ELNATHAN;

OR,

THE AGES OF MAN.

An Historical Romance,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY A PHILOSOPHER.

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. SHAKESPEARE.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
PRINTED AT THE
Minerva-Press,
FOR A. K. NEWMAN AND CO.
(Successors to Lane, Newman, and Co.)
LEADENHALL-STREET.
1811.

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BOOK IX.

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Old Age.

WHATEVER pains we may take to disguise it, the moment is truly painful when old age first announces itself. If we are weak enough to reflect on its evils, a sudden and secret chill overcomes every sense. The prospect of our approaching dissolution, which it brings, is not what most afflicts us; for Hope, heaven-born, suffers us to view it but vaguely at a distance, and even shadows it with flattering colours: but we are stung by the recollection of past days of happiness, which never can return—days that, while they rapidly fled, ceased not

to scatter for us seeds of regret, and which as they at length expire, reflect a soft gleam that mocks our desires. "Where," I mournfully exclaim, "are those days of felicity, when, following the butterfly from flower to flower, I gathered such as were sweetest and fairest, to adorn the brow of her I loved; where the smile that replaced upon my countenance the blush, induced by the alarms of modesty or virtue; where the melodious sounds of a beloved voice, or the sweet melody that charmed my senses; where the delightful walks, which, traced by love, made me joy in the breath of spring, or softly sigh with the gale of autumn;—those moments, in short, when nature, in a holiday garb, presented me with the charms of filial, fraternal, or conjugal love; with those of purest friendship, and innocent pleasures—alas! where are they? Gone! disappeared for ever!"

Elnathan and Zabdi, brought up by a courageous

courageous hand, and ever constant to the path of rigid virtue, were unacquainted with infirmity previous to the season of old age. Frequent catarrhs now interrupted the slumbers of the former, and indeterminate ailments, which annually grew more serious, warned Zabdi that his strength declined.

The complaints of the brothers, however, were far from presaging their end; together with an encreasing tendency to indolence, they simply warned them, that society had drawn from them the greatest portion of benefits she had to expect; that their passions began to slumber; that though their judgment, exercised and fixed by experience, remained entire, their imaginations and genius cooled, and would no longer, as of late, supply them with resources to guide their fellow-citizens. They had, however, the happiness of perceiving, that the qualities of their heart suffered no diminution.

"My dear friend and brother," said Elnathan to Zabdi, "let us become more united than ever, during the perilous course we have yet to run. Our children, though endowed with honour and sensibility, yet want that clearness of perception, and steadiness of conduct, which distinguished Abessalom and Noëma, and which in some degree they transmitted to us. The greatest part of our countrymen are grown false reasoners, impious, and vain; and such as may be excepted, live in retirement, dreading, above all things, an acquaintance with ministers of state. The sacred friendship then which has hitherto connected us, must be our true shield against the shafts of the wicked, our support in every danger, the thread that must guide us safely through the difficult paths we have entered; yea, our consolation in every misfortune that may await us."

"Ah! with all my heart," said Zabdi, tenderly embracing his brother; "let

our

our friendship cease to increase only with our lives; but shall we not place the God of Abessalom, Noëma, and Zambri, at the head of our mutual councils, the better to insure our success on earth, and to entitle us to an immortal crown?"

Although Belshazzar was of a retired disposition, and better loved the pursuits of learning than the pleasure to be found in crowds, his court remained the centre of dissipation. His queen was young and beautiful, and an advocate for pleasure, whose mazy paths she followed with reprehensible ardour. Those exterior forms of gravity and dignity, which are necessary to attract respect and veneration to princes, were repugnant to her; and she thought nothing would be more favourable to mirth and frolic, than for her and the august members of her family, at the close of day, to part with the garb of sovereignty, and assume humble habiliments, in which, favoured by the shades of night and

 mystery,

mystery, they might act in presence of their train, scenes of liberty and equality, hitherto unknown. It was scarcely to be imagined that these indiscreet revels should remain a secret for the public, or that they would fail to draw contempt towards the throne. Sephora and Mara, excited by their husbands, ventured to represent to the queen herself, and the ladies of her court, how much majesty lost by a neglect of due decorum, and how particularly dangerous it was at present to neglect aught that could procure obedience to the king: but their councils were treated as tiresome and old-fashioned; and it was even insinuated to them, that their frequent appearance at court would readily be dispensed with.

It would be impossible to trace the number of miserable adventures, feigned or real, and even humiliating for the royal family, that arose from these familiar arrangements of the queen. One in particular we will relate, which caused abundance

abundance of scandal, and provided the factious with subject to undermine the throne.

One of the predecessors of Belshazzar, from what cause is uncertain, suffered to remain in poverty and obscurity one of the fruits of his licentious amours. This was a female; from whom descended, at the distance of some generations, a daughter, who from her birth had been doomed to beggary. Acquainted with her origin, she conceived hopes of rendering her fortune suitable to it. This she saw was only to be done by closely spying the steps and the errors of the court of Babylon, and by worming herself into its intrigues.

Although the queen remained ever faithful to her husband, she betrayed an inordinate desire to please, particularly amidst a society of intimates which she had chosen, and from which was excluded the higher class of nobles and their families, who were thence much

offended. As may be imagined, the chosen circle of the queen failed not to supply their different wants at her expence, and to employ her credit to the last extent in the disposal of places. Her favour was so much abused by favourites and flatterers, that the wife of Belshazzar (whose humanity was one of her essential virtues,) found herself so reduced as to be unable to satisfy her charitable intentions, or even supply her wardrobe, which, nevertheless, she was anxious to render as brilliant and elegant as it was possible.

It was at this period that the intriguer we have named, and who bore the name of Naasson, was informed that a merchant of Babylon possessed a superb tiara of diamonds, which the queen was anxious to engage her husband to purchase, were it not that she feared thereby to disorder the finances of the state. Naasson was also aware, that the high priest Corozaim, remarkable for personal beauty,

ty, and to whom she had made herself known, was secretly enamoured of the queen Irene, who bore to him a mortal antipathy. What then was the conduct of Naasson? She sought the priest, whose projects she evinced a strong desire to favour, and assured him that it was requested by the queen that he would secretly negociate for the purchase of the tiara she so much desired; this purchase to be completed by certain periodical instalments on the part of her majesty. Naasson added, that the ornament once purchased, she would herself deliver it to the queen, who in one of her nocturnal walks, (which she was accustomed to perform, closely veiled, beyond the terrace of the palace,) would not fail to notice him in a manner from which he might hope every thing. The credulous priest, flattered beyond measure, hastened and procured the tiara, on the terms which he believed stipulated by the queen; and immediately after delivered

it to Naasson, who lost no time in separating the gems of which it was composed, and dispersing them in a foreign land, by the means of emissaries, who remitted her their value. In the mean time, that Corozaim might not discover the fraud, she promised him, on the part of Irene, a nocturnal rendezvous near the palace. The priest, palpitating with love and hope, was exact to the appointment; while a female, of the stature of the princess, and beneath one of those loose attires which, at this hour, she was wont to assume, advanced, and, in a low and hurried tone, expressed her thanks for the service rendered her by Corozaim; —she added, that being at that moment observed by one of the princes of the blood, she would take an opportunity hereafter of shewing livelier marks of her gratitude: and truly the husband of Naasson, wearing a princely habit, followed the fleeting steps of the pretended queen, who left Corozaim in the pro-

found

found belief of having for ever secured her good graces.

The period, however, assigned for the first payment relative to the tiara was expired some days, and the vendor of it not receiving the promised remittance, applied to Corozaim, who referred him to the queen; charging him, however, to let his application be as secret as possible. Irene, by whom the demand could not be foreseen, was enraged at what she believed the imposition and audacity of the priest, and determined to be revenged on him. To this end, she complained to the king, and Corozaim, on the day of a religious festival, and when enveloped in his pontifical robes, was sternly interrogated by their majesties, reproached, and mocked as a vile impostor; when he attempted to affirm, that the queen herself had thanked him for the purchase he had accomplished for her. Corozaim was even arrested, and transferred from the royal presence to the

the state prison, amidst the clamours of the populace. His captivity had long endured, when at length the truth came to light, and Naasson was imprisoned in his stead. She was, besides, condemned to have a red hot iron applied to her shoulder, that her infamy might be for ever marked.

It can well be imagined that the extreme frivolity, as well as culpable intrigues, of the court, were truly revolting to the characters of Elnathan and Zabdi, as well as to that state of calmness which increasing years particularly induced.

Notwithstanding, however, the seductions with which Belshazzar was surrounded, his principles remained pure, nor was it possible for him to become vicious. But he had contracted, in the continual struggle between his own opinions and those of his first favourite, and of his queen, a habit of indecision, both in the forming and executing his measures,

sures, which encouraged a hidden game played by the depraved nobles, by vain philosophers, by female libertines, and, in short, by every description of the wicked throughout Chaldea. Every thing concurred to hasten the dissolution of the empire. From the steps of the throne to the lowest mechanic, all were slaves to luxury, all exhausted their resources, and, at the end of each year, were plunged in debt. What could the virtue and experience of two aged ministers oppose to a torrent so rapid, which flowed into a multiplicity of destructive channels? They seized some rare opportunities, when the king was alone, to engage him to acts of public good, and, by coercive and vigorous measures, to correct the prevailing abuses. They thence procured to him and to themselves some moments of happiness, but whose fugitive charms resembled the last gleams of the setting sun tinging the fruits and harvest.

The life of Elnathan and Zabdi had

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been too pure and healthful not to furnish other proofs that nature provides pleasures for all ages, to mortals truly estimable. The cares and attentions of their children, to procure for them, as well as for Sephora and Mara, whatever could contribute to their health or amusement, the infantine caresses of their grandchildren, the number of whom daily augmented; music, executed for them by performers who were eager to shew their gratitude for past favour and protection; dramas, gay or touching, composed and acted for them by different members of their family; games of address, certain stokes in which excited for these amiable old men youthful vivacity; walks at sunrise, at noon, at the still hour of evening (according to the different seasons), when they loved to recall, for their friends or for each other, the most extraordinary events of their past life; cheerful repasts, to which were admitted young people, whose society was

was agreeable without being noisy;—such were the pleasures of the old age of Elnathan and Zabdi. We must also add to them, the care they took of their aged domestics, and their delight in preaching the maxims of Abessalom and Noëma, while next their hearts reclined Sephora and Mara.

But since, at any age, the enjoyments of man are not unmixed with pain, (without which he might cease to remember that his earthly sojourn should be but the secondary object of his desires,) Heaven prepared for our patriarchs a grievous event, which in its commencement promised only an increase of happiness.

In a vast forest of the western hemisphere, which separates Chaldea from Arabia, some travellers, who were benighted, perceived a creature whose form and stature was human, but who climbed the trees, and skipped from branch to branch, with an agility surpassing the

squirrel.

squirrel. Their first movement was to draw the bow, with the intention of piercing with their arrows this animal, wonderful in its formation, and in the use it made of its faculties. Another moment's observation, however, convinced them that it belonged to their own species, rather than to that which is alone guided by instinct, and they contented themselves by following its movements, and by friendly gestures endeavouring to make it descend from a high oak branch, on which it had at length perched. At first sight of the travellers, its fright and inquietude appeared great; but gradually it became calm, looked attentively at those who solicited it to descend, sent forth cries as if of astonishment, and even uttered articulate sounds; but these were monosyllables, the more unintelligible, as they were mingled with tones alternately sharp and melodious, and imitative of the cries of quadrupeds, or the singing of different birds.

birds. Farther to conciliate this species of savage, the travellers spread upon the turf some provisions they carried in a bag; they then laid some of the same at the foot of the oak tree, and returning to where they had arranged their repast, began to eat heartily before the eyes of the attentive spectator, who in some moments descended from his eminence, with an air of great precaution, and snatching up the food, quickly regained his position.

The travellers perceived that they must lay for him another snare, ere he could be caught. They therefore gathered up their provisions, and turning their backs on him, feigned to depart. The sylvan being followed them to some distance, and perceiving that they still pursued their way, he sobbed aloud, and at length lay down at the foot of a tree, watering the ground with his tears. These movements were slily noticed by his ensnarers, who doubted not (as night now closed

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in) that, overcome with his emotions, he would drop asleep. They were not mistaken: returning softly, they surrounded him, and, notwithstanding his attempts at resistance, obliged him to remain in the midst of them till morning, when, by repeated caresses, (still, however, holding him by each arm,) they induccd him to walk quietly with them to the next village. The surprise of the travellers was great to find, upon close inspection, that their prey was really a boy, apparently about eight years of age, finely formed, and of singular beauty, though his skin and complexion was soiled by his savage existence.

The news of this phenomenon spread throughout the country, and even reached Babylon. The sage Aspar, (whom the king, in approbation of his ripe judgment, had appointed to be one of the chief magistrates of the kingdom) and Theena, his amiable wife, who, at the time the young savage was taken,

possessed

possessed but two infant daughters, believed they would do a meritorious act in adopting him as a son. They were also pleased with the thought of cultivating the brute nature of this creature, and making him conscious of reason, religion, and social virtues. By means of a sum of money, they easily prevailed upon his keepers to resign to them the little savage, to whom they gave (though, as it proved, most unsuitably,) the name of Isaiah *.

Aspar and Theena henceforward regarded it as a duty, and even an amusement, to attend closely to his education. Nature went more than half way in hastening the graces and understanding of this wonderful child. Gradually his skin resumed its natural softness, his complexion partook of a fairer hue, and his fine eyes lighted up a countenance full of candour and sensibility; his move-

* Or, a present from God.

ments

ments were ever vigorous and agile. He learned, with extreme quickness, the Chaldean dialect, and drew in with ease every species of instruction. He betrayed, moreover, a disposition tender, affectionate, and grateful. At each mark towards him of the kindness of Aspar, he would cast himself into his arms; in return for instances of maternal tenderness, he would cling round the neck of Theena, and drop tears upon her bosom, while his invention was always at work to amuse her infant daughters.

The profoundest mystery enveloped his birth, and the first years of his life; when Elnathan, who loved to talk of his stay in Greece, one day accidentally spoke of the archon Megacles. At this name, Isaiah trembled, and repeated it several times with transport. He could now express himself sufficiently well to inform his adopted parents, that he had often heard that name repeated by one who, like Theena, called herself his mother.

ther. This accident gave hopes of being able to discover his origin. Elnathan immediately wrote to Athens, and, after many proceedings, which shame and fear long impeded, he was informed, that the archon Megacles, besides several other children, had had a son, called after him, and who became happily united to a relation of the wise Callophilus: that five years after this union, a dreadful thunder-storm visiting the capital of Attica, Megacles the younger, dreading the effects of the lightning, quitted his wife for a moment to look after their son, then four years old, who slumbered in the next room: that, as he stood beside the cradle, a flash of lightning deprived him of existence, while the infant remained unhurt. Elnathan also learned, that his wife, a prey to despair, from that moment conceived a horror of her child, and engraved on his shoulders the sign of lightning; and, to complete her barbarity, afterwards exposed him by the

sea-

sea-side: that, ere a year was expired, she fell a victim to the excess of grief, and most likely of remorse. By what means her son passed the sea, and arrived in the forest bordering Arabia and Chaldea, and there alone provided for his subsistence, were secrets alone known to the Great Disposer of events. Isaiah endeavoured but in vain to solve the mystery; he could only furnish vague and unconnected relations, from which nothing certain could be derived.

The pupil of Aspar and Theena at length reached the age in which love kindles sparks in the breast of man; when the unconscious heart confusedly roams in search of part of itself, from which it feels separated, and the senses awake to fix upon some pleasing object. The young Isaiah, led astray by gratitude towards his benefactress, cast on her looks tender and passionate; each day he imprinted upon her hand kisses more ardent, without her from thence taking the

the least alarm, or imagining they contained more than natural expressions of gratitude. He loved to wander, as formerly, through the thickest of the forest; but it was no longer to seek for subsistence—it was to draw deep sighs, and chaunt the charms, the virtues of his benefactress—to trace upon the bark of trees the name of Theena and Isaiah. It is difficult to describe to what a pitch may arrive the love of a youth for a woman his senior, whom he respects above all others, who is yet beautiful, and who lavishes on him tokens of tender esteem. Proud of vanquishing an object so superior, he languishes for her possession: his feelings, if maintained in secret, burst forth at length with proportionate violence.

Scarcely had Theena began to perceive that the gratitude of her pupil was likely to become tainted, rather than purified by love, when he, learning the departure of Aspar for his country-seat, from

whence he was not to return till the next day, crept secretly at the commencement of night to the apartment of his mistress, and, concealing his clothes beneath the bed, even glided into a corner of the conjugal couch.

Aspar arrives unexpectedly from the country, at the hour when his wife prepares to enter her chamber. He embraces her with his accustomed tenderness, and, guided by a feeble lamp, follows her to her apartment. But how great is the surprise of this couple, to find reclined in their bed the culpable Isaiah.

The unreflecting husband darts a terrible glance towards his trembling wife, who immediately swoons away. Isaiah disappears; while the cries of Aspar summon his attendants to the assistance of Theena, who remains senseless.

He would in vain disguise from them the cause of this accident; but they had seen the fugitive run half naked from the apartment of their master and mistress; his

his garments even were discovered where he had negligently laid them.

Truth and innocence quickly pleaded for the amiable Theena; nor would she deign to do more in her defence, than simply to affirm to her husband her total ignorance of the designs of Isaiah. Aspar believed her; but, in spite of himself, his tenderness for her henceforth abated. The whispers of servants, naturally libertine, and enemies to their masters, encouraged insinuations against the virtue of Theena. These even reached her; and together with the coldness of her husband, and regret at having inspired a guilty passion, preyed upon her health, and reduced her to the brink of the tomb.

At this period, and having passed the eighth month of her pregnancy, she summoned to her, her father, her mother, and her husband. "In heaven," said she, "I doubt not but I shall be shortly recompensed for the sorrows brought on

me by the wicked.—Aspar, to thee I was ever constant in thought and deed; be merciful then to the infant I carry in my lacerated bosom. Cherish also, I beseech thee, our daughters, the pledges of our former love.—And oh! my parents, accord to me at this instant, I beseech thee, thy blessing, of which I have never ceased to be worthy."

Her husband, her parents, her daughters, all cling round Theena, bathe her with their tears, and beseech of her yet to live for them. But the stroke was mortal: she survived only a few hours, to give birth to a son, which was buried in the same grave with its unhappy mother.

A mourning veil seemed to envelope Chaldea. The unfortunate Isaiah, in an obscure retreat, having learned the death of Theena and her infant, in a paroxysm of despair fled to the banks of the Euphrates, and buried beneath its waves his extraordinary and wretched existence.

The deplorable loss of Theena plunged her

her husband, Elnathan, Sephora, and their whole family, in excessive affliction—affliction that was warmly shared by Zabdi and Mara; they tried every possible means to soothe and console their friends, who took pleasure in heightening their grief, by recalling each trait, each charm, of the interesting and virtuous Theena.

Elnathan and Aspar, with their families, soon after their misfortune, retired to Ithamar: religion there presented to them its healing balm; it led them to dwell on the felicity which, without doubt, their beloved Theena tasted above, and reproached their selfishness, in so bitterly lamenting their separation from her on earth.—Oh! temporal separation from those we love, can any other earthly evil present a sting like them?

Still Chaldea hastened to its ruin. The worship of the true God was disfigured by the idol of liberty, or, rather, by the licentiousness of the passions—it was

shortly indeed totally banished from the capital.

The origin of this evil was attributed, principally, to two men, Bel and Nabo; the former gifted with the most brilliant imagination, at the expence, however, of energy and sound judgment; the other, with a mind proud, revengeful, and able to represent the abuses that might possibly have glided into the hierarchy—each, according to his mode, succeeded in flattering the profligate and ambitious.

Experience shewed that there was only one step between the contempt of sacred ordinances, which limits the consciences of men, and hatred of a sovereign, or chief magistrate, presumed likewise too absolute.

It is true, that too much discretionary power was in the hands of the ruler of Chaldea; that the aristocracy of the kingdom triumphed over the poorer class, and made exactions on them at pleasure; that justice

justice was most miserably distributed; and that the priesthood, alike with every other order, were guilty of excesses revolting to morality, and destructive of good example: but, alas! why not prune the tree, instead of tearing it up by the roots? Another must be planted in its place, whose growth might be uncertain, and which might even bear fruit more ill-flavoured—such, indeed, was the case.

A minister born in a foreign land, and who had become extremely popular, but whose views were short-sighted, and who was no doubt governed by ambition, induced the king to believe that the only mode of quelling disturbances, and providing for the necessities of the government, was to convoke a general assembly of the different orders of the state. This counsel was enforced by a certain high priest, who assured Belshazzar that it was the plan most conformable to public opinion. He spoke, no doubt, from interested motives, and with a desire of

increasing,

increasing, rather than remedying existing ills; for how easy was it to see that this general call of the nation, at such a moment, would expose the government to the rude attacks of versatile and ardent youth, of rash eloquence, and open impiety! a more glaring and irremediable mistake never was committed.

The last order of citizens, as it might be expected in those seditious times, had a preponderating influence in this famous council of the nation. The discontented and ungrateful amongst the superior orders, secured a place in it to a crowd of tumultuous upstarts, who made it their sport to reiterate the cries of the populace towards a system of perfect equality. Thus this assembly, in contempt of all established laws and customs, after a series of factious proceedings, declared itself legislative, and even proceeded to give a new form of government to Chaldea. The former courts of judicature were annihilated, the priesthood disgraced,

graced, and their legitimate rights trampled under foot by clamorous demagogues, who styled themselves philosophers. The domains of the nobles (particularly of such as were attached to their king) were confiscated, and their castles reduced to flames. A furious populace carried rapine and devastation throughout every province, and massacred all who attempted to oppose their progress.

The rights of the sovereign presently ceded, and he became the slave of a seditious assembly, and the sport of a mob, who beheld him only covered with the tatters of royalty. Just and good, Belshazzar heard himself calumniated, and falsely accused of being a tyrant, and of having crowded the state prison with unfortunate victims—he, who had ever shewed himself an enemy to arbitrary power; and, in fact, on the demolition of this edifice, it was found deserted, and containing only the bones of traitors, condemned by former kings.

The celebrated foreigner who had lately been at the head of the king's councils, accused (no doubt wrongfully) of assisting a prince of the blood in his guilty practices to promote the downfal of the king — this man, undefineable, who at different periods shewed himself honest, pious, and benevolent, now became an object of contempt for that populace which he had regarded as the ladder by which he would ascend to supreme power. With difficulty he escaped their fury and took refuge (after having been once pompously recalled by this cruel and frivolous nation) in one of his domains situated on the borders of Greece. It was here he sunk into entire oblivion.

Elnathan and Zabdi assisted now but rarely at the councils of the king; for their prudence and upright intentions were contemned by the greatest part of his counsellors. They still, however, sought him in private, and offered that advice

advice which to their conscience appeared best, and which was dictated by the study of those revolutions which had hitherto saddened the earth.

Having endeavoured by every palliative to console and sustain him, their next endeavour was to withdraw him from the tyranny and fetters of the republican assembly, now supreme; as likewise from the outrages of a great part of his subjects. To this end, they secretly took precautions for his quitting Babylon, and for his thence gaining some fortress beyond the frontiers of his dominions, from whence he might openly proceed to join some of his royal kinsmen, who had hastened to seek the interference of the neighbouring princes in this overwhelming period.

But so important a scheme as the deliverance of Belshazzar could not escape detection. Arrived at nearly sixty parasangs from his capital, he was arrested by order of the existing government, and

with his wife, his children, and sister, led captive to Babylon, and plunged with them into prison.

After this event, Elnathan and Zabdi, their wives, the wives of Sophonius and Azer, with their daughters and infant children, as likewise the offspring of Aspar, retired to Ithamar, there to exist in the closest retirement. They were followed by only a few domestics, one of whom went secretly every day to gain intelligence of the king and his family, whom farther to succour was impossible.

This amiable society, by various occupations, vainly sought to dissipate their grief at the constant accounts they received of the barbarous mode in which Belshazzar and those dearest to him were treated. Their melancholy gained even the youngest amongst them, since Elnathan and Zabdi too truly foresaw how things would terminate.

An impious, factious, and inhuman tribunal, supported by a mob satiated with

with blood, in defiance of every law, human and divine, at length proclaimed the amiable Belshazzar a traitor to his country, and worthy of death.

He was now only permitted to take his leave—a leave the most holy and affecting that the world ever witnessed—of his beloved wife, of his son, yet an infant, of his daughter, fair and interesting, and of his sister, the most heroic and virtuous of mortals. He had already traced for them in writing his last wishes; they were conveyed in a style the dignity and wisdom of which might be disputed for between earth and heaven. Having resigned his whole soul to pious meditation, he at length mounted the scaffold with a firm step: he there lamented the unhappy lot of his people, once more recommended his soul to God, and tranquilly laid his head upon the scaffold!

Elnathan and Zabdi, overwhelmed with sorrow, and having attained their eighty-second year, judged rightly that the

time

time was come for them to have done for ever with human grandeur. As secretly as possible, and by means of some faithful followers, they disposed of their palace at Ithamar, and of whatever property they possessed at Babylon and its neighbourhood, and retired with their families into their native province, even to the spot that had given them birth, where, with the profits of their effects, they purchased farms and houses for each child descended from them.

They burthened these little domains with two annual taxes—one destined to maintain the worship of their fathers, and relieve the pilgrim and traveller; the other was set apart for the unfortunate, whether natives of this happy soil, or whether strangers and victims to revolution.

Amidst these various classes of the wretched, hereafter to be succoured, were to be preferred the descendants of Abessalom and Noëma.

At

At the period of the above regulations, Sophonius was the father of eight sons and two daughters; Azer of seven daughters and three sons; two daughters also remained of Theena. Now, as the law of Moses prescribed that the Israelites should, in preference, choose wives from amongst their own families, those twenty-two beings were destined to be united in marriage. Already had the eldest son of Sophonius become the husband of the first-born of Theena, and the oldest of the sons of Azer the partner of Sophonius's eldest daughter. Two infants proceeding from the first of these unions, and one from the second, gave to Elnathan and Zabdi, with Sephora and Mara, the pleasure of beholding their offspring extend to the third generation.

The dreadful days which succeeded the martyrdom of Belshazzar, gave room to believe that Providence had decided Elnathan and Zabdi most opportunely to remove from Babylon. From amongst the

the scourges that overrun that city, there arose a monster in the shape of man, who, amidst general anarchy, seized the sceptre of power, and caused all classes to drink the dregs of affliction. This was a reign of terror, and of cruelties unheard of. The wife of Belshazzar, his son, his sister, all fell victims to the merciless rage of the tyrant. Not even the instigators of rebellion were spared in particular. He inspired friends, neighbours, the nearest relatives, with distrust of each other. Whole quarters of towns, pillaged by his emissaries, were marked out for execution.

While this period of horror was at its height, Elnathan and Zabdi met their reward for having remained the constant worshippers of God, the benefactors of their fellow-creatures, and the protectors of the happy land that gave them birth. The grateful and good people to whom they had confided the safety of their families, and of their old age, at the approach

proach of a corps of sattelites from the tyrant of Chaldea, boldly marched forward to oppose them.

"Advance no farther," cried they, coming up with their oppressors, "or every arrow we possess shall be tinged with your blood—once more, advance no farther—we are resolute, and our arms are strong to punish you without mercy."

A little band of brave and virtuous men were thus able to daunt a horde of sinners. The emissaries of the tyrant were seized, as if supernaturally, with terror: they at length calmly retired, their former fury changed into admiration, first assuring the village train, that neither they nor their comrades would attempt to erect the standard of the new government in a district so blessed.

The brave defenders of true liberty returned in triumph to embrace their wives and infant children, and to assure them,

them, Elnathan and Zabdi, of future peace and security.

The vassals of Elnathan continued not to remain inactive: despising danger, they generously forwarded succours to Sophonius, Azer, and Aspar, who had followed the princes of the house of Belshazzar into a foreign land. These succours proved truly acceptable, since the unfortunate stranger is seldom able for any length of time to secure active pity, even amongst nations most characterised for humanity. The sons of Elnathan and Zabdi met not, even from their royal masters, such tokens of gratitude as they might have expected; their services were rather received as marks of duty, than as the voluntary offerings of affection. Nevertheless, they relaxed not in their endeavours to restore monarchy to Chaldea. At certain intervals they alternately sought the embraces of their wives and children; yet all returned beneath the standard

standard which honour once more waved in favour of religion and royalty.

Amongst the foremost of such as chance or ingenuity suffered to escape from the stroke of the executioner, and who met a refuge in the land of Abessalom and Noëma, were a youth and virgin, nearly of the same age. They were first met by Sephora at a little distance from her dwelling, fleeing they knew not whither, terror and despair in their looks. By her their fears were calmed, and by her were they led to peace and safety. Their story was nearly as follows.

An humble Levite and his wife, residing in the little village of Soree (whose inhabitants they carefully instructed in the knowledge of God), having, by the repeated strokes of death, been left childless, were resolved on adopting two orphan children, a boy and girl. Elziar and Resia, the offspring of two different couples, were therefore, at the age of three years, taken from a charitable in-

stitution,

stitution, where they had hitherto been protected, and placed under the roof of the Levite.

The good man had chosen these infants from a number of others, on account of their healthful state, their engaging gestures, their countenances, expressive of tenderness and intelligence.

The happiest system of education was immediately adopted by the Levite and his wife for these interesting creatures; it was not borrowed from innovators and sophists—its basis was simplicity, disinterestedness, and true piety. The ambition of the Levite, how meritorious, how amiable was it! No other pleasure he found than in forming the minds and dispositions of two beings alone, with the view of promoting their happiness—their happiness, which he even hoped would chiefly consist in hereafter loving each other.

The toils of Elziar and Resia consisted in cultivating flowers to ornament the tabernacles

bernacles of the Hebrews on the days of their most distinguished festivals; or in rearing trees, whose fruits were to be offered to the needy proselyte, or to the exhausted traveller.

The two orphans gradually improved in beauty till they reached the term of their youth, when their exterior graces were rivalled by the candour that dwelt in their souls, and the bright intelligence that emanated from their minds. Formed so equally, and so closely brought up, it was only natural that perfect sympathy should dwell between them.

Their peaceful and happy existence under the roof of the Levite and his amiable wife, was at length interrupted, even as they completed their eighteenth year; the love too, which secretly and fondly budded in their bosoms, was also prematurely forced to bloom—still did it lose nothing of its vigour and luxuriance.

Elziar and Resia first saw with horror the altars which their care had been used to

to decorate, disgraced, overthrown, trampled on, by an impious and blood-thirsty multitude—the ministers of the Most High vilified and persecuted, and the records of the law they preached committed to the flames. One of the agents of the execrable tyrant now entered Soree, and dared to cast a wanton glance on the chaste and interesting Resia. On a certain day, she received his commands to repair in the evening, without fail, to his abode of luxury and profaneness. As this terrible order arrived, Resia was retired within a recess of the garden belonging to the dwelling of her guardians, where, in concert with her beloved Elziar, she raised her melodious voice to chant the praises of Heaven.

"Ah! my dear Elziar," cried Resia, "what can this monster want with me?"

"It signifies not," replied Elziar, "while I am here to protect thee."

"And wouldst thou indeed endanger thy life by accompanying me?"

"Had

"Had I a thousand lives," said Elziar, "they should be dedicated to thee."

"But what means, alas! hast thou to oppose to Galaad?"

"Should he intend thee ill, I will endeavour to soften him by prayers and tears; should these fail, I will brave him —die with thee."

At the idea of death assailing Elziar, Resia shuddered, and grew earnest in her entreaties to be suffered to go alone to the abode of Galaad. Elziar listened not to her. On this day, when danger drew near, did they learn how dear they were to each other!—the tenderness of Resia, the enthusiasm of Elziar, mounted high, ere the moment they were to reply to the demands of the tyrant.

As two innocent lambs advancing to slaughter, so proceeded Elziar and Resia to the habitation of Galaad. The arrival of the virgin whose presence he had required is announced to him; his satellites retire,

retire, and Resia advances, followed by her lover.

"And who art thou," said Galaad, in a voice of thunder, addressing Elziar, "that thus, unasked, intrudest upon my privacy?"

"I am," replied the youth, "the friend of Resia—from our infancy we have never been separated, and we are mutually answerable to our good guardians for each others' life and destiny."

Galaad mocked this artless reply with a sarcastic smile. "From henceforward," said he, "thy cares may cease; Resia will own another protector—this night she shall become my wife!"

Elziar stood aghast—Resia dropped upon her knees, and, with clasped hands, raised her supplicating eyes to heaven.

"But Resia loves thee not," said Elziar—"this very day even has she promised to become mine for ever."

Alas! the imprudent youth! The eyes of

of Galaad darted vengeance; "Thy insolence shall be punished!" said he; and calling to his attendants, he ordered them immediately to conduct Elziar to prison.

"And I also!" said the distracted Resia, throwing herself into the arms of her lover. He madly clasped her to his bosom—"Death only shall part us!" cried he, drawing forth a dagger, and presenting it fiercely with one hand, while with the other he encircled the form of his beloved—"him who dares to separate us, this weapon shall be dyed with his blood."

But the courage and desperation of Elziar availed but little against a horde of soldiers, who quickly entered the room; coming behind him, they suddenly hold fast his arms, from whence was torn the agonized Resia.

Elziar was hurried along, and cast at length into a dungeon. What were his sensations as the hours revolved! But a little time before, and he had received

 the

the sweet assurance of everlasting love from the object that dwelt nearest his heart—now, alas! she was dead to him; she was, oh, dreadful thought! in the arms of another, of a hateful monster! What situation on earth could be more bitter than that of Elziar, as stretched at the bottom of his cell, this contrast presented itself to his imagination!

The night was far advanced—he hears the door of his dungeon open—he can rejoice, for he expects the stroke of the executioner—"I am ready, quite ready," cried he, starting up. Elziar feels the touch of a woman—"Heaven has taken pity on us!" she softly whispers—the voice is Resia's—it is no phantom. Speechless he clasps her to his heart—clasps Resia, his beloved.

"Follow me," said she; "a chance of safety offers—the town is in flames, nor is the abode of Galaad spared." They rush from the blood-stained prison, the doors of which, amidst the general confusion, are

are left unguarded. "But our good, our tender guardians," said Elziar; "we must not forget them." Resia also failed not to consider the safety of the good Levite and his wife. Amidst a scene of horror scarcely to be described, they hastened towards the quarter where had stood the peaceful and happy dwelling that had hitherto protected them. Alas! it was enveloped in smoke and flame—they loitered round it, but no trace was to be seen of their adopted parents.

The morning now began to break, and instant flight must be resolved on; even so; it was scarcely possible that they should at length obtain safety, surrounded on all sides by enemies, flying they knew not whither, and unprovided by the least means of support.

Resia, borne from the arms of her lover, had remained a close prisoner in the house of Galaad, from whom she had nothing but the most dreadful horrors to expect. "I quit thee," said he at one time,

time, "but to return shortly; dare not to oppose the least of my wishes, or, ere many moments elapse, shall be brought to thee the head of that insolent youth, who presumes to rival me." What were the terrors, what the anguish of Resia! After being left alone longer than she could have expected, the sound of footsteps warned her that the moment of punishment was at hand: she sunk prostrate, her face to the ground. Still Resia heard the hurry of footsteps going to and fro, but no person entered her chamber. The confusion encreased—shrieks reached her ears, and she soon found herself surrounded by flames. Thus alarmed, she flew to the door, which she found fastened; a little window, which lighted the apartment, she next tried; no bolt secured it. The distance between it and the ground was frightful; yet for Resia there was no alternative but to precipitate herself from thence, or perish in the encreasing flames. She boldly threw

herself

herself forward, and miraculously escaping from fracture, in wild distraction braved every obstacle, and reached the prison-door, where she supposed was confined Elziar, if the axe had not already deprived him of life. She knelt, she prayed, she supplicated the keeper to inform her of Elziar—to give him up to her if possible. The man was not dead to all sense of humanity, and believing that the general consternation which prevailed would give him means of screening himself from the wrath of Galaad, he opened for Resia the dungeon of her lover.—Galaad, sunk in intoxication, had nearly paid the forfeit of his barbarity: he had not expected that, when he condemned to destruction a distant part of the town of Soree, the conflagration would extend throughout it, and even surprise his own habitation.

Elziar and Resia pursued a long and difficult course, even till, overcome with fatigue and terror, they were met by the

 humane

humane Sephora. To find rest and safety amongst beings so amiable, what unexpected joy! Amidst the descendants then of Abessalom and Noëma did they take up their abode, and beneath their auspices were they suffered to exchange vows of everlasting fidelity. They had but one sorrow; the fate of the good Levite and his wife, their kind guardians, remained for them a mystery—but do we not see that unmixed felicity is a stranger on earth?

Time advanced, and upon the ruins of the throne of Belshazzar was erected an oligarchy of colossal stature, but deprived no doubt of all solid base. To the sanguinary government that favoured its formation, it now substituted one mild in appearance, but which was in reality oppressive. Versatility and contradiction reigned in its decrees, since its principles were chimerical.

Notwithstanding the comparative tranquillity which the Chaldeans enjoyed, the care

care which their new rulers took to nourish amongst them, by vain declamation, that enthusiasm for liberty — liberty purely metaphysical, which not even years of misfortune had yet shewn them the fallacy of—above all, the art with which, profiting by their warlike disposition, they involved them in wars interminable with their neighbours, sustained, during a short number of years, this vacillating, but still wondrous government.

The Chaldean armies, with their chiefs, were doubtless, during a term of years, an irresistible scourge in the hands of Providence, to chastise whole portions of the earth. Most of the neighbouring nations were so blindfolded, as for a length of time to receive them with outstretched arms, as angels of peace, destined to establish a happy state of primitive freedom. These mistaken people became, by turns, the victims of their credulity, and the objects of the most

 barbarous

barbarous exactions, ere they would renounce their obstinate blindness.

During this latter period, how was employed Elnathan and Zabdi, their wives, and such of their children as shared their peaceful retreat? They addressed to God, under the auspices of Naaman, and in concert with Saaph and Mesron, (yet enjoying health and vigour,) and in fact, with the whole of their native colony, the humblest and most ardent prayers for the return of peace to the earth, as also the establishment of the true worship. They concealed, they clothed, they fed upon their rural domains, numbers of wretched emigrants, whether Levites, nobles, or peasants. To others, who had taken refuge in a foreign land, and who were reduced to want, they imparted what succours they could spare; and interested themselves farther in their behalf, by writing to different foreign ministers whom they had formerly been able to conciliate,

Elnathan

Elnathan and Zabdi also occupied their leisure in building, planting, and other improvements, calculated to promote the future comfort of their descendants. Such of these as were in their infancy they delighted in holding on their knees, and in endeavouring to amuse. "Ah! my dearest Elnathan," said one day Sephora to the sage, "we are even approaching, though insensibly, the age of these innocent creatures, whom you so delight in." Truly, the next day Elnathan completed his seventeenth lustre, and entered the season of extreme old age; a season provided perhaps with truer enjoyments for the wise and virtuous, than even those more fruitful in active pleasures.

ELNATHAN;

OR,

THE AGES OF MAN.

BOOK X.

BOOK X.

Extreme old Age.

THE youth abandoned to all the ardour of his passions, even him of maturer age, regards with compassion rather mistaken, the period of extreme old age, when man, he prematurely supposes, becomes nearly an automaton, incapable of the least enjoyment. But Nature, a kind mother, far from deserting at this season her intelligent offspring, when he has hitherto rendered himself worthy of her cares, now prepares him for eternal felicity, in granting to him a series of tranquil and substantial enjoyments, and in gradually blunting for him the point of various evils,

evils, which at other ages overwhelm the children of men. If even a feeble sense of misfortune remains to him, it is because unmixed enjoyment is impossible on earth, where the evil spirit is destined for ever to contend with Heaven for empire over mortals. Thus, while the hurricane abases and tears up by the roots the flourishing tree, whose thick foliage and clustering fruit resists its impetuosity, it respects the isolated trunk, that has yielded its best productions—it passes it, and leaves only in its traces the zephyr, intended to caress the last tuft of foliage which serves to crown it.

But the case is different with nations. When despotism, a barbarous policy, or extreme immorality, has sapped their foundations, that they are at length mutilated, nor exist on the earth where they flourished, but by some scattered roots, no hopes can be entertained of their conciliating the homages, or even the pity, of future ages. In proportion as time advances,

advances, it prepares for them a hollower sepulchre. Happy are they, if a few degraded colonies, scattered over their solitary domains, may attest for the benighted traveller their former glory and power, and awaken in him sad wonder, even destined to be spent in sighs.

Thus the once flourishing empire of Chaldea, changed from the first monarchy of the world to a barren republic, equally deprived of solid base and connection in its numerous ramifications, presented not, in the prospect of its old age, one germ of regeneration, one principle of education, favourable to posterity, one law that could retard its fall, and prevent it from being swallowed by oblivion.

It was indeed a new chaos, that required the voice of the Creator to call to light and life. The more successful were the republicans in their conquests (and successful they were to a miracle), the more they oppressed the neighbouring

nations,

nations, and made every ruler of the earth tremble. They had already lost twelve hundred thousand of their troops, sent in swarms to oppose a number of powers that had coalesced against them; yet was this unheeded by their ambitious generals, who were content, since they had succeeded in their work of rapine and cruelty. To reign over the earth, or sacrifice themselves instantly on its bosom, were the only alternatives they chose. While the republicans gloried in their triumphs abroad, at home they amused the nation, which was become their slave, with games and representations the most puerile and incongruous.

Elnathan and Zabdi, with their amiable wives, enjoyed, on the contrary, in the canton where they were so justly beloved, and which was even revered by the wicked, all that a venerable old age, reposing on its virtues, could taste of felicity on earth. What a happy privilege for the virtuous, treading the boundaries of a long

long life, to extort homage of respect and sensibility from mortals of every age! All men must reflect, that, on approaching the term of their earthly career, they will stand in need of caresses and succours; they therefore willingly pay a tribute to those who are already so placed. Besides, who could insult him, neither willing nor able to defend himself?—here cruelty itself stops. It may strike the infant in the cradle, because it regards in it a future enemy, or because it may intend pain to its parents; but the old man offers only a human shadow, harmless and benevolent, which will even quickly vanish. Cruelty itself would vainly fret to aim a blow at mere air, incapable of echoing a groan to its useless throes.

We must yet observe of the old man on the brink of the tomb, that he is no longer, as in the first stage of old age, subject to constant irritation: his blood now flows in one even and undisturbed

course.

course. He weeps perhaps from tenderness or want; but he cries not, like the imperious infant. So Mara, become also very aged, nearly lost her former turn for satire, nor was longer hurried away by passion; she became an angel of gentleness: often was she besieged by trains of her great grandchildren, who teased her by their tricks and caresses, without her betraying the least fretfulness, or without the least alteration appearing in her countenance, unless it was that of mild pleasure.

If most of the senses lose their intensity during extreme old age, that of taste acquires new force; the pleasures of the palate are still vigorous to support life and afford enjoyment. The heart, too, becomes more enlarged; it expands more for the objects that surround it than it was wont.

The fireside in winter, and a cheerful blaze, were now real enjoyments for Elnathan and Zabdi: they loved, too, to

feel

feel the influence of the sun; in it they acknowledged the benevolence of their Creator, to whom more than ever are their thoughts directed. What delight to find themselves beside an old friend, whom they remind of past pleasure and past friendship! how sweet, too, seated beside their wives, to hold between their knees their infant descendants, whom they amuse with tales of yore, intermingled with moral and religious maxims!

Thus, while the decay of Babylon was foretold, from a chain of unfortunate and irreparable events, that of our patriarchs (whose judgment and memory remained entire) was a presage of the virtue and happiness of their posterity.

During fourteen years, in which was comprehended the extreme old age of Elnathan, not a day passed in which he did not recall, for such of his descendants as were capable of comprehending his lessons, some primitive law of religion, humanity, or prudence, accompanying it

it with some interesting tale or anecdote, likely to grave it in the young heart.

Our patriarchs, now given up to peace and to their God, and believing that heaven should, in this disastrous age, be frequently propitiated, caused redoubled sacrifices to be offered to the Almighty. At one of these, Matra, the youngest daughter of Aspar, was chosen to head the choral train of virgins that attended on these occasions. Her mind tinctured with holy awe, Matra, at the conclusion of the pious ceremony, returned not home with her companions, but, invited by the stillness of evening, strayed through the groves, and along the crystal stream that meandered through her neighbourhood. The sun was set, the flocks were driven in, and the moon shed her mild lustre over the softened landscape. Matra, of a pensive turn, indulged her reveries, and dwelt on the memory of her sainted mother, even till she had wandered to a considerable distance

stance from home, much farther than prudence would admit of, in the present unassured state of public tranquillity. Unwarily overtaken by the shades of night, she turned round with some alarm—alarm that was quickly heightened by the barking of a dog close beside her. Pale and trembling, she looked fearfully around, and, with added terror, beheld issuing from behind some trees, a young man in a hunter's dress, and armed with a javelin. She instantly sunk on her knees, and in tremulous accents cried—"Oh! spare an imprudent maiden; nor let your arrows pierce her bosom, thus far from the paternal roof."

"Rise, fair maiden," replied the youth, "your knee should bend but before the throne of God—neither murder nor rapine am I intent on—Ninus is my name; my abode is not far hence; chance alone directed my steps hither: but what could lead you to this solitude at so late an hour? May God preserve your heart pure, and

us thank Providence for sending us a welcome guest."

Ninus, with downcast eyes and serious mildness, inclined his head, and gratefully returned the greetings of his host.

Meanwhile the servants of Elnathan made preparations for the evening repast; they washed the polished table with pure water, then covered it with simple viands and delicious fruit; nor had Sephora forgotten to fill a crystal vase with that generous liquor which expands the heart of man in the convivial hour. Ninus was invited to take his place at the hospitable board by the side of Elnathan. The conversation was tranquil and cordial; the youthful descendants of the reverend patriarch preserved a respectful silence, while he entertained his guest with instructive remarks and interesting narratives. During the course of the social meal, observing that the youth frequently sighed, and seemed to labour

under

under secret sorrow, he gently sought to discover its source, and induced Ninus to promise, that the next morning he would confide his sorrows to his experience. Elnathan and his amiable family saw with pleasure the sun once more rise majestically above the hills, and shed his enlivening influence within their valley. They were anxious to hear the adventures of the stranger, whose appearance and manners had excited in them much interest. Ninus appeared soothed by their renewed greetings, and, having shared their morning repast, seemed willing to commence his narration. Elnathan led the way to where a luxuriant plane-tree spread wide its cooling shade; here, amidst expecting glances, Ninus, kindly solicited, commenced as follows:—

"I am of Grecian extraction; my family, overwhelmed with domestic misfortunes, were induced to forsake Megalopolis, and retired to a small estate situated on the Messenian shores. About

that period, the venerable Oreb first taught in Greece those sublime truths which heal the wounds inflicted by misfortune.

"Already disposed to wisdom by the lessons of adversity, and by the simplicity of Arcadian manners, my parents were the first amongst their countrymen who embraced the pure worship of the Hebrews. I was secretly brought up in conformity to the law of Moses, and spent the days of childhood in humble submission to this divine yoke. A short time after I had completed my sixteenth year, urgent business required my father's presence at Syracuse; but bowed down with premature old age, his declining strength permitted him not to encounter the fatigues of the voyage, and he determined upon sending me thither in his stead. Before my departure, he bestowed on me his advice and his blessing. My mother Zaphna accompanied me even to the galley which was to bear me away. While the

the sail was spreading to the gale, she raised her hands to Heaven with fervent prayers for my safety; her heart bled at the thoughts of the tempestuous seas, and still more tempestuous world, before me.

"Already the treble file of rowers cut the waves, and the galley rapidly advanced. I kept my eyes fixed on the receding beach, and, when I no longer could discern my weeping parent, I endeavoured to descry the roof which had sheltered my infancy, and the top of the tall trees belonging to my paternal inheritance. Our navigation was long and uninteresting; I must not, however, omit to mention an incident which seduced me towards the first step beyond the path of rectitude. The sea was perfectly calm, when an Athenian galley, carrying deputies to the festival of Delos, appeared in view. This vessel was gaily decked with flowers, and adorned with the statues of the gods; the white sails,

 empurpled

empurpled by the rays of morn, swelled before the balmy breeze, and the gilt oars glided through the smooth bosom of the deep. A band of youths, bending gracefully over the waves, shed around libations and perfumes, while a beauteous group of virgins sung in melodious strains their fabled deities. This enchanting scene floated before my enraptured senses, like a bright cloud displaying its glowing tints in a serene evening. Thus it was that for the first time I beheld Pagan rites without horror.

"At length the coast of Sicily arose to our view; we landed in safety, and I soon found myself in the voluptuous city of Syracuse. The splendour of its edifices, and the busy throng in its populous streets, filled me with new and tumultuous emotions. The ardent curiosity which I indulged with youthful eagerness led me to destruction. When at last I returned to my usual avocations, I felt that I had lost my relish for serious things,

things; and I could not forbear envying my heathen associates, who might without remorse drain the intoxicating cup of joy.

"Alas! the contagion of example too fatally corrupted my mind; three years spent at Syracuse in heedless dissipation sufficed to obliterate almost every trace of my primitive faith. I sunk into that apathy, perhaps more dangerous than actual crime, as it suffers remorse to slumber. However, Zaphna's letters, and the remonstrances of my father's friends, occasionally disturbed my deceitful tranquillity.

"Amongst those who preserved a tender and faithful remembrance of my father, was an aged priest, who in secret offered up his vows to the God of Israel.

"Michas (such was his name) essayed every method to revive within me my former piety. Often would he lead me to some sequestered grove, or unfrequented field in the environs of the city,

and there, with parental solicitude, seek to win me back from the labyrinth of vice; but the brilliant delusions of youth had dimmed for me the torch of truth. Far from deriving any benefit from those salutary effusions of pious zeal, to my eternal confusion be it spoken, I sighed after the sacrilegious temples and licentious festivals of idolatry!

"After repeated and fruitless admonitions, Michas had recourse to more rigorous measures.

'You will force me,' did he often say, 'to separate you from the chosen people, and abandon you to the unpropitiated wrath of Heaven.'

"I alike despised his advice and his menaces; my conduct became the theme of public animadversion; but the hour of punishment was at hand.

"I repaired one evening to the retired abode of Michas, at the extremity of one of the suburbs of Syracuse, and penetrated even to the sanctuary where he performed

performed the sacred rites. I found him standing before the altar, holding in his right hand the tables of the law, and surrounded by a few Levites and hidden followers of the faith of Abraham. His eyes flashed fire; he appeared majestic and awful, like Moses when he denounced divine vengeance on the apostate worshippers of the golden calf. I offered to advance; a Levite sternly forbade my passage, the rest averted their eyes from me, and the priest, in tremendous accents, pronounced these appalling words:

'Let him be accursed who forsakes the God of Israel! Thrice let him be accursed who beholds with indifference the abominations of idolators!'

"I was then driven from the hallowed place; the pious band dispersed, avoiding my presence; they fled from me as from one breathing pestilence around. Like Adam banished from Paradise, I found myself in a dreary wilderness, and accursed on account of my sin.

vague and luxurious reveries. Alas! miserably wedded to this perishable world, the glories of the creation delighted my senses, but raised not my soul to the omnipotent Author of Nature.

"Immersed in fallacious joys, I strewed my path with flowers; I sought Pleasure in riotous revelry, or followed the enchantress to myrtle groves and mysterious recesses; yet neither the fascinating smiles of beauty, nor the enchantments of love, conferred happiness upon me. An indefinable inquietude tormented me. My soul yearned for the sweets of tender reciprocity and unreserved sympathy; but from criminal engagements truth and peace were banished; deceit, jealousy, indifference, and sorrow, usurped their place. By turns, faithless or betrayed, I ever sought, in a new object, that indescribable charm which my former attachments had not bestowed; and, when I thought my dreams of bliss realised, I still grasped but a shadow; the magic veil in which

which my glowing fancy had wrapped the fair idol, soon dropped, and revealed her native imperfections. Languor and weariness oppressed my heart; I turned away melancholy and disappointed, ever regretting the chains I had broken in disgust. Thus, in the midst of enjoyments, I was wretched; for I had forsaken celestial virtue, which can alone satisfy the ever-rising desires of man.

"At my return to Sicily, I tasted no longer the pleasures of dissipation: a secret foreboding saddened my heart; my most intimate friends were on the eve of their departure from Syracuse. Alas! such is life! made up of fleeting joys and long-protracted pain. By a strange fatality, the dearest connexions are never formed in the hour when they might be durable; we meet the friend with whom we would willingly spend our whole life, just at the moment when fate is ready to snatch him from us; a thousand accidents separate friends during life, and then

 comes

comes that irreparable stroke of death which dissolves all our ties, and destroys all our projects.

"Deprived of my beloved companions, Syracuse seemed to me a dreary solitude; I wandered dejected and forlorn; a sensation of shame for the inglorious effeminacy of my past life arose in my bosom—I determined to burst the ignoble fetters, which had so long marked me the willing slave of vice and degrading indolence.

"An opportunity soon offered of developing those germs of courage and manly feeling, which lassitude and regret had sown in my mind. The Celto-Germans had made an irruption into the territories of the Celto-Gauls, then under the domination of Evilmerodac. The Babylonian monarch, although sunk in debauchery, and nearly touching the brink of the grave, was roused by the danger of his northern subjects; he sent a strong force into Celto-Gaul, in order to

to repulse the barbarian hordes by which it was invaded.

"The news of this expedition widely spread abroad, and suggested to me the project of serving as a volunteer in the Chaldean army, which was already assembled on the marshy banks of the Rhine. In consequence, I prepared to depart from Sicily, content to embrace the profession of arms, and to relinquish my unworthy mode of life; yet such is the force of habit, that I could not without regret bid adieu to Syracuse: I set out in the middle of night, and, as I traversed the silent and deserted streets, I could not forbear giving a sigh to the remembrance of those friends with whom I had there spent many hours in noisy merriment, or in voluptuous repose.

"After a long, toilsome journey, I reached the Babylonian head-quarters. The Chaldean general gave me a gracious reception, and placed me, as a simple bowman, amongst a band of Grecians, who,

who, like me had enlisted under the banners of Evilmerodac; promising, however, to promote me on the first favourable occasion.

" Here was the second of those sudden revolutions which have continually altered the colour of my fate—from the peaceful solitudes of Arcadia, I had been transplanted into a tumultuous and corrupted capital; and now, from the lap of luxury and civilized society, I rushed forth to encounter hardship and danger amidst barbarous nations.

" Those people who inhabit the wilds of Celtic Germany are the most ferocious of barbarians; they look upon peace as the most galling servitude which can be imposed upon them, and therefore they incessantly harass and distress the adjacent countries by predatory incursions.

" A few days after my arrival, the army was set in motion. The country, intersected by the branches of the Rhine, inundated by the waters of the sea, and choaked

choaked up with thick forests, presented at every step insurmountable difficulties.

"Exhausted by the labours of the day, I was allowed but a few hours to rest my weary limbs. Often did it happen to me, in that short interval of repose, to forget my altered condition; and when, at the first dawn of morn, the shrill clarion proclaimed the return of day, I felt surprised to open my eyes in the midst of woods: this sensation was not wholly unattended by pleasure; I never heard, without a sort of martial joy, the sound of the trumpet echoing through the rocks as it called the slumbering soldiers to arms.

"The toils of war did not excite my regret for the delights of Syracuse; but it awakened within me far more interesting recollections. Many a time, during the long autumnal nights, have I been placed a solitary centinel at the advanced posts of our army. While I contemplated the numerous fires burning in regular

gular symmetry within the Babylonian lines, and the scattered blazes of the barbarians: while, with half-bent bow, I listened to the buz of the adverse army, to the roaring of the sea, and dismal notes of the bird of night, I pondered on my singular destiny. The love of my country revived in my breast—Arcadia, with all its charms, arose to my imagination. How often, during a fatiguing march, or under miserable huts, where we spent the night, have I conversed with Grecian soldiers (exiled like myself,) about our native land. We eagerly related the sports of our childhood, the adventures of our youth, and the histories of our families. But when, casting our eyes around, we compared the dark lowering horizon of Celtic Germania, the dull heavy sky, the flat and colourless landscape, scarcely illuminated by the watery rays of a powerless sun, with the magnificent scenery of Greece, its fertile plains, and picturesque mountains; the fra-

grance

grance of its citron groves, and the pure azure of its skies—a violent desire of revisiting our happy climes seized on our souls, and damped our military zeal.

"The Celto Germans had been surprised by the Babylonian troops. They at first avoided an engagement; but, as soon as they had rallied their dispersed warriors, they boldly advanced, and offered us battle, close to the sea-shore. The night was employed in preparations on both sides; and the following morning, at break of day, the contending armies were within bow-shot of each other. The rising sun, emerging from a purple cloud, shed its oblique rays over our glittering ranks; martial ardour glowed in every breast, every eye flashed fire, and threatened destruction to the foe. The trumpet sounds, the charge and the conflict begins in all directions.—The Chaldean legions rush impetuously forward against the barbarians, whose close battalions give way. Babylonians, Greeks, and

... Gauls—we all follow our chief within the broken columns of the enemy. A thousand groups of warriors by turns press and repulse each other; death, despair, and confusion, prevail in every quarter; sighs of regret mingle with the shouts of defiance; the shrieks of the vanquished and the triumphant clamour of the victors alike rend the air.

" However, the exhausted combatants now strike but weakly; more plaintive and doleful cries are heard, and are succeeded by a silence deep and horrible, even as that of the tomb:—steeds, bereft of their riders, bound in wild affright amidst heaps of mangled corses, while a train of heavy war engines, abandoned in the field, and a prey to devouring flames, glare as the torches of this immense funeral.

" The shades of night involved in darkness this scene of carnage and desolation: the defeated, but still formidable Celto Germans, retreated behind their entrenchments;

ments; we remained maste[illegible]
awaiting with impatience the return [illegible]
day; but the wished-for light disclosed to us a scene far surpassing in horror any that we had yet witnessed.

"During the night the barbarians had cut off the heads of the fallen Babylonians, and had placed them on spears in front of our camp, with their faces towards us. We remained speechless with astonishment and dismay at this woeful sight; tears filled our eyes as we beheld the ghastly relics of our companions in arms: each of us remembered that those lips, now stiffened and colourless, opened but a few hours before to pronounce words of kind import. To this emotion of regret, a thirst for vengeance quickly succeeded. We awaited not the signal for assault; nothing could withstand the fury of our soldiers; the enemy's entrenchments were forced, their camp opened on all sides, and with savage delight our exterminating bands bathed themselves

[...]selves in the blood of the panic-struck barbarians. The Chaldeans triumphed—yet I shared not in their victory. Posted with a handful of men at a distance from the main body of our army, I sustained for a while an unequal combat with a strong corps of the enemy; but at length overpowered by numbers, I fell covered with wounds by the side of my slaughtered comrades.

"When my senses returned, I found myself stretched on a mossy bed, in one of those subterranean recesses in which the barbarians conceal their provisions in time of war. A Celto German, in a slave's habit, was kneeling by me, and carefully examined my wounds.—'Young man,' said he, 'be of good cheer; thy wounds are not mortal, I believe;' then taking out of a wallet an aromatic ointment, he dressed my scars, and bound them up with the long leaves of the sea-weed. After having poured a cordial down my throat, in order to recruit my debilitated

debilitated frame, he depar[illegible]
'Poor youth, I must leave you, [illegible]
will be obliged to pass here the night
alone; I hope to see you to-morrow;
in the mean time, endeavour to taste some
repose.'

"The next day the kind slave, pursuant to his promise, came to the cavern, followed by several serfs, who laying me on a kind of litter, formed with interwoven branches of trees, carried me on their shoulders to the Celtic German camp. The remains of the barbarian army were retreating before the conquerors. I was thrown into a baggage waggon along with the rest of the wounded. We marched northwards, for fourteen days and as many nights, without ever halting, until at length we were beyond the reach of the Babylonians.

"Weakened by pain and fatigue, I was at first nearly insensible to my desolate situation; but no sooner had time restored my health and vigour, than I looked

...und me with horror. I saw ...elf in the midst of forests, a slave to barbarians, and imprisoned in a wooden hut, exposed to the rigour of an inclement sky. A scanty portion of barley, ground between two stones, and a short allowance of impure water, was my only nourishment—a coarse woollen tunic was my apparel, and the bare ground my bed. The presence of the barbarians disgusted me in the extreme; the stench of the bear's grease which they rub on their hair, the nauseous smell of broiled flesh, the closeness of my hut, ever filled with clouds of smoke, almost suffocated me. Thus, by a just retribution, I expiated the voluptuous luxury which had inebriated me in the enchanted bowers of Sicily. The old slave who had rescued me from impending death as I was lying on the field of battle, where he had repaired to bury the killed and succour the wounded, I saw but little of; his laborious occupations seldom allowed him an

 hour

hour of leisure. However, o[illegible] visited my wretched abode, and in co[illegible]passionate accents said to me—

'Your health is now restored; to-morrow you will enter upon a new office: I know that you are to be sent, along with other slaves, to the thick of the forest, to gather wood for fuel. My dear fellow-prisoner, recall your virtue, and may Heaven bless and endow you with fortitude!'

"With these words the slave left me, a prey to rage and despair. I passed the night in dreadful agitation, revolving various plans of liberation, sometimes intent upon self-destruction, at others determined upon flight; but how could I escape, how find my way in those trackless wilds? In my misfortune, I might still have found consolation in religious resignation; but, alas! my heart rejected the celestial comforter, and abandoned itself to impious murmuring and hopeless dejection.

"Early

... next day a rough voice ... called to me —

'Babylonian slave, arise.'

"I sullenly obeyed. I was furnished with a bear-skin for my covering, a horn full of water and a dried fish for my sustenance: a troop of serfs led the way. When we had reached the place of labour, they began to pick up, amongst the snow and dried leaves which covered the ground, boughs of trees broken by the winter storm; they piled them together in large heaps, which they tied with the pliant bark of oziers: these several operations were performed by them with wonderful alacrity.

"They invited me by divers gestures to imitate their toils; but seeing that I was a stranger to manual labour, they placed on my shoulders a heavy bundle of logs. Thus was my proud neck forced to stoop under the ignominious yoke of servitude; my bare feet trod the chilling snow, and the

the sharp northern blast froze my tears as they fell. I was compelled to support my tottering steps with an oaken branch, and, bent down under my degrading load, I slowly proceeded amidst the tangled brushwood.

"I dragged out the gloomy months of winter in this humiliating state. At last spring shed its benign influence over the northern forests, and wholly changed the aspect of the woods and glades: the dark angles of rocks peeped first through the uniform whiteness of the snow; the reddish trunks of pine trees appeared next; and the earlier blossoms of flowering shrubs budded where icicles had hung in shapeless clusters. Part of the Celto Germans took the field again; others prepared to hunt the bear in distant regions. Rothmer, the eldest son of the barbarian chieftain, put himself at the head of the hunters, and I was included in the herd of slaves destined to accompany him. We journeyed with incredi-

 ble

ble rapidity across the vast tract of land which extends from the Scandian Sea to the shores of the Euxine. Heaven had decreed that I should recover my liberty on the borders of the Ister. As we traversed a thicket in our way back to the wilds of Germania, a famished wolf sprang upon Rothmer; I had the good fortune to kill the ferocious animal. From that moment my young master promised to solicit my freedom: I became his constant companion during the remainder of the chase, and even slept by his side.

" After several months absence we arrived at the barbarian camp. The Celto Germans, weary of unsuccessful warfare, determined to offer peace to the Chaldeans; and as Rothmer, faithful to his word, had already obtained my liberty from his father, it was farther decided, that I should instantly depart to bear pacific proposals to the Babylonian quarters.

" Once more reunited to my comrades,

rades, I delivered to our general the conciliatory message I had been entrusted with; and, after some preliminary negociations, a truce of thirty years was concluded between the hostile parties. The Chaldean army prepared to return home, leaving, however, considerable garrisons in Celtic Gaul, to check the turbulent spirit of its inhabitants, and prevent the encroachments of their restless neighbours.

"As a reward for my services in the establishing of peace, and as a compensation for my severe sufferings, I was appointed to the government of one of the forts which had been erected by the Chaldeans during the late war.

"The fortress where I commanded, a few miles from the sea, was seated on a steep rock, flanked on one side by a lake, and on the other by an extensive forest.

"Thus sequestered from the world, I interrogated my conscience, and probed wounds which I had not yet dared to

 examine.

examine. Most of my time was employed in an attentive perusal of the sacred volume. Hope once more cheered my bosom, and I gradually lost that bitterness of heart, which an intercourse with unjust and corrupt men is so apt to produce. Already did I reckon upon having obtained a complete victory over my passions; unfortunately, they were only lulled into a momentary slumber; their extirpation required a vigour of soul far superior to what mine, enfeebled as it was by long vicious indulgence, could boast of.

"An unforeseen event interrupted the course of these salutary reflections. The centinels apprised me that, for some time back, they had observed in their rounds a woman, who, issuing from the woods at night-fall, embarked alone, crossed the lake, and disappeared behind the rocks.

"I was not ignorant that the Celtic women had a share in the most momentous deliberations of their warriors, and I there-

I therefore thought it my duty not to disregard the warning I had received; but aware also of the brutality of my soldiers, I determined to watch myself for the appearance of the Gaulish woman.

"At the close of the evening, I wrapped my mantle round me, and privately leaving the castle, I stationed myself on the verge of the lake, in the spot pointed out to me by the centinel, and there waited for some time concealed behind a clump of trees.

"On a sudden my ears were struck with distant sounds—I anxiously listened, and distinguished human accents; at the same moment, I descried a skiff on the ruffled waters of the lake; a woman steered it towards the land—she sung as she struggled against the storm, and I saw her throw at intervals the fleece of sheep and waxen cakes into the lake, as a propitiatory sacrifice to her barbarous divinities. She landed, fastened her boat to a willow tree, and bent her steps in the direction of

of the forest; she passed close to me. A short black tunic, without sleeves, scarcely veiled her tall majestic form; a gold sickle hung from her girdle, and a wreath of oak leaves bound her temples.

"The dazzling fairness of her arms and bosom, her blue eyes, her vermilion lips, and long dishevelled flaxen hair, announced a Gaulish virgin. She sung tremendous words in a melodious voice, and her uncovered bosom heaved like the undulating waves.

"I followed her at a distance through the forest; we next traversed a wild uncultivated heath, and then reached a second forest. The twilight had now deepened into darkness; the young woman stopped near a monumental stone, and thrice clapped her hands; at this signal thousands of lights appeared in the recesses of the wood—a multitude of armed barbarians emerged from behind the trees, each carrying a flaming torch in his left hand.

"The

"The mysterious maiden cast her eyes on the assembled warriors, and, after a solemn pause, thus addressed them:—'Faithful children of Teutathes, I cannot contemplate you without tears: the sons of the brave have bowed under the Babylonian yoke. The time is now come. Rise, my valiant friends, burst your galling chains; what I propose is not impossible; but if Teutathes does crown our efforts, if the fortune of Evilmerodac still prevails, let us forsake a debased country—whether foreign nations grant or refuse us an asylum, we will yet find a corner of the earth where to live or die.'

"The effect produced by this discourse, pronounced by torch-light in a dreary desart, and near a sepulchral stone, is indescribable. The imagination of the auditors, thus powerfully excited, left no authority to reason; a league with the Celto Germans was unanimously agreed upon. The orb of night was on its decline; the Gauls, fearing a surprise,

 extinguished

extinguished their torches, and dispersed amidst the windings of the forest. On my return to the fortress, I convened the Gaulish tribes, and declared to them, that their seditious meetings and treasonable plots were known to me; but that, as violence was abhorrent to my character, I would for the present content myself with their solemn promise of remaining loyal in future to Evilmerodac, and therefore allow them to return unmolested to their respective homes—on condition, however, that their chief Vertorix, and his daughter Frega, should be delivered into my custody. The Gauls sent forth shouts of joy, and exalted my clemency to the skies. In the evening they brought to me the two stipulated hostages, to whom I gave the fortress as a prison. Order was restored: I had nothing left now but to watch over my captives, and take precautionary measures for the preservation of public tranquillity.

"Grief

"Grief and anxiety preyed upon Vertorix, and a raging fever attacked him. During his illness, I bestowed upon him the care due from humanity to a suffering fellow-creature. Every day I visited the father and daughter in the tower where they were confined. The old man recovered; and Frega, who had at first appeared deeply dejected, seemed now to have nearly forgotten her sorrows. I frequently met her wandering in the galleries, in the secret passages, or in the winding staircases leading to the top of the fortress; when I thought her with her father, I often perceived her at the end of some corridor, gliding in the dark like a phantom.

"In this truly extraordinary being, dignity and voluptuousness, innocence and artifice, were strangely blended. She was at once capricious and alluring—her glance was quick, her brow disdainful, her smile irresistibly sweet and fascinating. Pride reigned uncontrouled in her

 breast,

breast, and the enthusiasm of her feelings often hurried her to the brink of insanity.

"One night I was watching alone in a spacious hall; the moonbeams shot a pale lustre through the narrow loop-holes, and gleamed faintly on the polished swords and spears ranged along the walls. I had extinguished my taper, and sat deeply musing on the occurrences of my chequered life.

"Suddenly a faint light glimmered at one extremity of the gallery; it gradually approached, and I discovered Frega. She held in her hand an iron lamp, her golden tresses were confined with a garland of vervain, and a tunic of snowy whiteness descended in graceful folds to her unsandaled feet. She suspended her lamp to the straps of a shield, and drawing close to me, said—

'My father sleeps—I would speak with you.' Then sitting down by me, she continued:—'Do you know that I possess

possess a power over the elements—that I can raise and quell the storm?'

'I do not acknowledge such power,' I gravely answered; 'the storm and the whirlwind obey only the voice of God. My faith abhors such superstitions.'

'I speak not of your faith,' replied she impatiently; 'tell me, did you not hear last night in the woods the gurgling of the torrent, and the moans of the blast, in the high grass? Well, it was I who bade the torrent roar,—it was I who sighed in the gale—I had observed that the murmurs of the winds and water were soothing to thy soul.'

"I felt pity for the fair maniac.

'I move your pity—I see it in your eyes,' she continued; 'but, if you think me mad, impute it to yourself. Ah! why did I ever see you—why were you so kind to my father? I am a consecrated virgin in the temple of Teutathes; whether I keep my vow inviolate, or break it,

it, I must die, and you will be the cause. Farewell.'

"So saying, she arose, took down the lamp, and left me. Never, oh sage Elnathan! had I experienced such poignant sorrow—never had the quiet of conscience been disturbed by me. I had, however, with complacency cherished guilty passion in my heart; it was therefore but just that, in the fierce pangs of passion, I should find my punishment.

"Vertorix was yet too weak to leave the castle, and I could not without inhumanity separate the father from his daughter. In vain I ceased to visit the old chieftain—vainly I avoided Frega—she would wait entire days where she thought my duty would necessarily call me, and there talk to me of love.

"I felt not, it is true, that Frega would ever inspire me with that genuine tenderness which binds soul to soul, and irrevocably fixes one's destiny; but the

daughter

daughter of Vertorix was young, beautiful, and impassioned; and, when her words breathed passion, my senses were tumultuously agitated.

"At some distance from the fortress, and amidst a thick wood, grew a cluster of oak trees, at whose feet the natives were accustomed to sacrifice human victims; from their branches were suspended arms and other warlike insignia, which moved to and fro with the breeze, and, as they clashed, reechoed a hollow murmur. To this solemn spot I was wont to stray. One night in particular I here ruminated; the wind whistled high, and scattered at my feet some tufts of moss and ivy. Frega suddenly appeared.

'You fly me,' said she, 'and even seek the most deserted spots to avoid my presence--yet in vain; the tempest which carries to thy feet that withered moss, also brings to them the wretched Frega.'

"She stood opposite to me, crossed her

her hands on her bosom, and fixing on me her eyes, added—

"'I have much to tell thee, and could wish not hastily to quit thy presence. I know that my complainings importune thee, and that, alas! they will not gain me thy love; still do they contain rapture for me. I joy in nourishing my flame, and in making thee acquainted with all its violence. Ah! didst thou love me, what would be our felicity! to express our thoughts, we should find language worthy of heaven. As it is, words fail me, because thy soul replies not to mine!'

"A gust of wind shook the forest, and murmurs issued from the bucklers of steel. Frega started, and looking up to the suspended trophies, 'Those sighs,' said she, 'come from the arms of my father, and surely announce for me misfortune.'

"Again she hesitated, and again continued—'There must be some reason for thy

thy indifference. My love, so fervent, should beget from thee some return.'

"Once more was Frega silent. At length, as if starting from profound reflection, she exclaimed—'Ah! thy coldness I can now account for—thou hatest me, since I have no present worthy to offer thee!' Then drawing near to me, in hasty transport, and laying her hand upon my heart, she cried—

'Youthful warrior, thy heart remains tranquil beneath the touch of love—a throne perhaps would make it palpitate. Speak! wouldst thou reign? I will secretly arm our warriors—I will myself march to combat. Should success even fail, there are to be found caverns in Gaul where I might hide my husband. Alas! unhappy Frega! thou namest a husband, and never shalt thou be loved!'

"The voice of the maiden expired—her hand fell from my heart—her head drooped—and her momentary enthusiasm died away in a flood of tears.

"This

"This interview filled me with affright; I began to fear that all resistance was vain. My emotion was extreme as Frega ceased to speak; and during the remainder of the day, I felt the burning impression of her hand upon my heart. Willing, however, to make a last effort to save myself, I took a resolution, which only aggravated the evil it was intended to prevent. The Almighty, when he intends to punish us, can turn against us our own wisdom; nor does he give us credit for prudence too long delayed.

"I have already mentioned to you that the weakness of Vertorix prevented me from dispatching him from the fortress; but the old man's strength returning, and extreme danger now encreasing for me, I affected to receive letters from Evilmerodac, commanding me to dismiss my prisoners.

"Frega wished to speak to me before her departure, but I refused to see her, that we might both be spared an agoniz-

ing

ing scene. Her filial piety, I knew, would not permit her to abandon her father; and, in truth, she followed him as I had foreseen.

"The next day, however, she appeared at the gates of the fortress; and, on being told that I was gone a journey from thence, she hung her head, and sought her groves in silence. For several succeeding days she likewise inquired for me, and met the same answer. The last day of her appearance, and having been denied my presence, she leaned for some time against a tree, attentively regarding the fortress. I observed her from a window, and was unable to restrain my tears, as at length, with lingering steps, she moved away.

"Frega returning not to seek me, I began to taste some repose, and to hope her fatal passion was cured. Weary of confining myself within the fortress, I resolved to breathe the open air. I threw over my shoulders an ape skin, I armed myself

myself with a hunter's spear, and, sallying from the castle, seated myself on a high hill which overlooked the sea.

"As Ulysses regretting Ithaca, or as the Trojans exiled to the vales of Sicily, I contemplated the vast extent of ocean, and wept. 'Born at the foot of Mount Taygetus,' said I, 'the sad murmur of the sea was the first sound that struck my infant ear. Many are the shores I have seen, and against which dash the waves that I here contemplate—who would have told me, some years ago, that I should hear murmur on the coast of Gaul the waves which rolled along the beauteous coast of Messina? Ah! where will my pilgrimage end?'

"Such were my reflections, when the soft tones of a harp, accompanied by a human voice, reached my ear. These sounds, interrupted by moments of silence, by the murmurs of the ocean and the forest, by the cry of the sea-bird, produced an effect wild and enchanting.

I looked

I looked around, and beheld Frega seated on the heath. Her attire announced the disorder of her intellects. The berries of the sweet-briar composed her necklace, her harp was linked to her bosom by a branch of ivy, and a white veil thrown back over her head, reached beneath her feet. She was pale, and her eyes appeared sunk with weeping; still was she lovely to behold.

" An exclamation of surprise, which escaped me on beholding her, attracted her attention—she recognised me, and joy illumined her countenance.

' I well knew,' said she, drawing near, ' that I should attract thee hither—the sound of my voice is irresistible;' and again she renewed her melody.

" After a few moments she ceased to sing, and advancing still nearer to me, she said—' I know not what spell invites me to seek thy traces—I wander round thy castle, but, alas! am not permitted to enter. Could I know what form would please

please thee, I might . . . . . but no--I desire to be loved for myself; to love me under a borrowed shape, would be inconstancy.' On pronouncing these words, Frega uttered shrieks of despair; but presently becoming calm, she endeavoured to read in my looks the secrets of my soul.

'Ah! yes,' said she, 'the Babylonian women no doubt have exhausted thy tenderness—they have been loved by thee to excess—yet what are their advantages over me? Knowest thou not, that the fathers, the brothers, the husbands of the Gaulish women, look on them as divinities? Thou hast perhaps been told that we are capricious and inconstant—yet hast thou been deceived; our passions are strong, their consequences lasting.'

"I took the hands of the unhappy maiden, and pressed them tenderly within mine.

'Frega,' said I, 'if you would prove to

to me your love, return to y
he needs thy support—nor longer g
way to a sorrow which troubles thy reason, and will even cause my death.'

"I descended from the hill, and Frega followed me; we advanced into the country along solitary paths, and where the herbage was green and smiling.

'If you had loved me,' said Frega, 'what pleasure we should have had in viewing together the fair face of nature! On the banks of the river, beneath the shade of the oak, along this perfumed hedge, we might have admired the setting sun. Sheltered by some ruined hut, we might have listened to the tempest—we might have wondered at the lightning's flash—never have I beheld the meanest dwelling, without thinking that with thee it would suffice!'

"I at length arrived with Frega at the entrance of a grove of pine and larch trees. The daughter of Vertorix stopt.

'My father,' said she, 'inhabits this grove;

not therefore that thou ... enter; for he accuses thee of having robbed him of his daughter. My sorrow thou mayst behold unmoved, for I am young, and unvisited by infirmity; but the tears of an old man rend the heart. Farewell! I will seek thee at the fortress.' Frega now suddenly quitted me.

"This unexpected meeting at once overturned my reason. Such is the danger of passion, even when we share not its transports—its breath brings poison and intoxication. Twenty times, while Frega expressed her sentiments so tender, so sorrowful, was I on the point of throwing myself at her feet, of proclaiming her victory, and my own defeat.

"Some days elapsed, and Frega appeared not at the fortress. I feared lest some fatal accident had befallen her. Full of inquietude, I was repairing to the dwelling of Vertorix, when I received intelligence that the barbarians were assembling

sembling once more an angry wave dash- of Babylon. I was obliged in shook it to its turn, and prepare for defence. I placed louds my troops under arms, and arranged them as I thought most advantageous. The day passed thus employed; night brought with it new inquietudes.

"A slave whom I had sent with a letter to Frega now returned: he brought back the letter, with information that the maiden had quitted her father's habitation about the third hour of day, and had not afterwards been heard of. I became a prey to alarm—and to conceal my emotions, retired to a solitary spot at some little distance from my troops.

"I had indulged my melancholy but a short time, when a slight noise caused me to start, and, looking round, I perceived, though dimly, a fleeting shadow. Grasping my sword, I instantly pursued the phantom—but what was my surprise, on seizing Frega!'

'Art

said I, 'to betray the Babylo[illegible]s?'

'To betray!' repeated Frega, in a tone of indignation; 'have I not sworn never to be engaged against thee? Follow my steps—thou shalt even know what brings me hither.'

"She took me by the hand, and conducted me to the edge of a rock at no great distance, and which overlooked the sea.—'Cruel Ninus! my woe touches thee not—thou art less merciful than these rocks; they at least will speed my repose—yes, eternal repose do I intend to seek! Promise that, even when I shall be veiled for ever from thy sight, thou wilt forward to me news of my father! When any one dies, thou wilt write to me, and throw the letters on the funeral pile! They will reach me in the land of souls! I will read them with delight, and thus shall we converse at each side of the tomb.'

"At

"At this moment an angry wave dashed against the rock, and shook it to its foundation; the winds blow, the clouds roll, and the pale moonbeams issuing thence, gild the surface of the waters—a shout is heard from the camp—Frega trembles. 'I go!' said she, and precipitated herself from the rock. I caught hold of her garments, and, drawing her suddenly to me, saved her fall.—Oh, venerable sage! how can I continue my recital! I am covered with shame—yet do I owe you the full confession of my errors—I will submit them without reserve to thy experience, and next take refuge in thy indulgent charity.

"Exhausted by the several combats I had encountered with myself, I could no longer resist this last proof of the love of Frega. So much beauty, so much passion, so much despair, deprived me of reason—I was conquered.

"Snatching the maiden to my bosom, I exclaimed with transport—'Yes, thou

shalt indeed be loved!' Hell rejoiced in this unhappy vow, and my protecting angel flew to heaven!

" The daughter of Vertorix consented to live—or, rather, she had no longer courage to die. Love, remorse, shame, fear, and, above all, surprise, agitated the heart of Frega—she could scarcely conceive that I was the same Ninus, hitherto so insensible—she almost believed herself abused by some phantom of night. My own happiness partook of despair; and, in the midst of our mutual felicity, we might have been mistaken for two culprits condemned to death.

" Weeping and smiling, by turns, Frega, the happiest and most unfortunate of beings, remained wholly silent. The dawn of day commenced, and yet the enemy appeared not. I returned to the fortress, and was followed by my victim. On the morning of the third day after we had there retired, Frega mounted her car to revisit her injured parent.

parent. She had scarcely disappeared, when I saw arise above the neighbouring forest columns of smoke and flame. The next moment I was informed that general confusion reigned in every village, and that shouts of vengeance resounded on all sides.

"At length a horde of barbarians in reality advanced. I placed myself at the head of the Babylonian troops, and, arriving within javelin length of the enemy, I commanded my soldiers to halt, while I advanced alone between the two armies. 'Gauls!' cried I, 'on what account are you thus assembled? Speak; what can lead you thus to revolt anew?'

"An aged chieftain approached from the enemy's ranks. How great was my surprise! I beheld him bending under the weight of those accoutrements I had seen suspended amidst the forest. O grief! O confusion! the venerable warrior was Vertorix.

'Gauls!' cried he, 'you behold him

who has dishonoured my grey hairs! A slave followed my daughter, whose reason wanders; even beneath the shades of night he witnessed the trespass of the Babylonian. Revenge your daughters and your wives! Revenge the Gauls and your Gods!'

"He spoke, and darted at me a javelin—it fell harmless at my feet—I could have wished that it had pierced my heart. The Gauls reechoed shouts of vengeance, and pressed upon me on all sides. My soldiers, however, quickly advanced to my succour. The combat became bloody. Indifferent to the attempts that menaced my life, I thought only of saving that of Vertorix; yet, whilst I endeavoured to shield him from danger, a javelin, directed by chance, pierced him to the heart—he instantly expired.

"At this moment a car appears at the extremity of the plain; it is driven by a woman, who, in wild affright, appears anxious to give wings to her steeds.

"Frega,

"Frega, not being able to find her father, and hearing that he had assembled the Gauls to avenge the honour of his daughter, suspects that she has been betrayed, and feels the extent of her crime. She flies upon the traces of her father, and arrives on the field of battle—she drives her steeds through the ranks, and discovers me sighing over the corse of her parent.

"Transfixed with grief, Frega arrests her steeds, and cries aloud—'Gauls! suspend your blows; I alone am the cause of your woes! I alone have killed my father! cease then to expose your lives for a guilty virgin, who voluntarily abandoned herself to dishonour. The Babylonian is wholly innocent. May my death give peace to my country!' So saying, she drew a poniard from her girdle, and plunged it within her bosom.

"Frega fell back in her car—her blood flowed in torrents; she would have pronounced the name of him she loved, but

her lips refused aught but an indistinct murmur—I dwelt no longer with the virgin—her eyes closed for ever!

" During this shocking scene, the soldiers around me held me back, and prevented me from darting forwards and immolating myself on the clay-cold body of Frega. As a just chastisement for my crime, I was to behold the victim of seduction, but to consign her to the grave.

" From this moment I am to date the grand era of my life; since then it was that I seriously returned to the path of religion. Until now, my faults had been personal, and their consequence had only fallen on my own head, and therefore they made but a transient impression; but when I found myself the cause of another's destruction, my heart revolted within me; I no longer wavered. The distempers of the soul, like bodily maladies, require change of scene for their cure. I determined to leave Gaul, to renounce the world, and weep my errors

in

in solitude. Full of sorrow and remorse, I abandoned the heaths and forests, once the habitation of Frega, and returned to Syracuse. There some of my former associates endeavoured to entice me to their dissolute orgies; my sadness corrupted the joys of the banquet; affecting to smile, I detained the sparkling cup at my lips, to conceal the tears that bathed my cheeks.

"Michas received my vows of repentance, and immolated the expiatory victim to purify me from my sin. Shortly after, I embarked on board a vessel bound to Egypt; we weighed anchor, and the Sicilian coast soon disappeared from our view.

"Alas! I had already traversed those seas when I first left Arcadia. I was then young, full of hopes, dreaming of nought but honours, wealth, and fame; the world appeared to me through the dazzling veil of illusion. What a change! I was now withdrawing from the realities

of that very world, and what had I learned in my toilsome pilgrimage?

"After a prosperous voyage, we descried on our right the long chain of the Lybian Mountains; on the left, the high cliffs which frown over the Erythrean Sea; and in the middle space between those two stupendous barriers, the tops of the great pyramids—seated at the entrance of the vale of the Nile, they stand like the sepulchral gates of Egypt—or, rather, they rear their heads like a trophy erected to the victories of death. Not far distant from those monuments of human vanity and human littleness, Memphis rises, surrounded with groves. I remained but a few days in that city, now bereft of its former splendour. I touched the limits of that desert which witnessed the flight of the Hebrews, and which is consecrated by the miracles of the God of Israel. I intended to cross it in my way to Syria, and for that purpose hired a guide to conduct me to the borders of the

the Red Sea; from thence I meant to proceed to Arsinoe.

"Some dried dates, and a few skins filled with fresh water, composed our whole stock of provisions. We crossed over the first ridge of mountains on the eastern bank of the Nile, and losing sight of the humid plain, we entered an arid wilderness. Night came; the moon shone bright on the solitary waste, where no object soothed the eye, no shade invited to repose. The next day the sun rose despoiled of its rays, the heat was excessive, the air oppressively still. About the third hour, we heard the shrill shriek of the ostrich; the serpents and the camelions hastened to hide themselves within the bosom of the earth. My guide looked up to heaven, and turned deadly pale—'I am afraid of the south wind,' said he; 'let us fly!' and turning his face to the north, he ran at full speed. I followed him close.

"Suddenly from the extremity of the

desert a whirlwind arose, the soil, turned up before us, shook under our feet, while immense columns of sand rolled behind us, threatening annihilation. Bewildered in a labyrinth of moving hillocks, the terrified guide declared that he no longer knew his way. A devouring thirst parched our lips, we dreaded to breathe, lest we should inhale scorching flames; a scalding sweat bedewed our relaxed limbs. Meanwhile the hurricane violently increased, thick clouds of burning sand obscured the skies. My wretched guide dropped down before me; I heard his dying groan; he was stifled by the suffocating atmosphere. I strove to restore to animation my ill-fated companion, but in vain; the vital spark was extinguished. Overwhelmed with despair, I sat down at the foot of an accacia, the only vestige of vegetation in that dreary spot; under that feeble shelter I awaited the termination of the storm. Toward evening the wind veered to the north, the

the atmosphere lost its sultry heat, the sandy clouds dispersed, and unveiled the stars—their radiant brightness cheered me not, it only shewed me the immensity of the desert.

"Every boundary had disappeared, every track was defaced. The succeeding day completed my misery: exposed to the vertical rays of the sun, I lay stretched beneath the solitary tree, and awaited death with frightful resignation.

"Already the sun had passed the middle of its course; suddenly the roaring of a lion echoed through the waste. I raised myself with difficulty, and perceived the tremendous animal striding over the sand. It struck me that he was perhaps going to some spring haunted by the wild beasts in those solitudes. Recommending myself to the Almighty, I arose and followed my strange conductor. We were not long in reaching a narrow glen, in which was a well of clear water, surrounded with green moss; a palm-tree

extended its luxuriant foliage over the well, and its boughs bent under the weight of ripe fruit. This unexpected relief infused new life into me. The lion quenched his thirst in the refreshing spring, and then quietly retired, permitting me to taste undisturbed the banquet prepared for me by Providence. From under the palm-tree a lofty mountain was discovered bounding the eastern horizon. I bent my steps towards that natural pharos, which seemed to indicate a haven amidst the motionless waves of an ocean of sand. With much toil and fatigue I reached the base of the mountain, and climbed up the steep and craggy rocks which surrounded me on all sides. The night was already far advanced; I groped my way for some time, and presently perceived a glimmering light through the fissures in the rock. I drew near, palpitating with surprise and hope, and actually discovered a lamp burning at the bottom of a grotto.

'Whosoever

'Whosoever you are,' cried I, 'have compassion on a bewildered traveller.'

"Scarcely had I spoken, when I heard the voice of an old man singing a canticle out of the Scriptures.

'O faithful son of Israel!' I exclaimed, 'receive a wandering brother.'

"A man, bending under the weight of decrepitude, now appeared at the entrance of the grotto.

'Stranger,' said he, 'you are welcome. You see before you a man on the point of mingling with his native dust. The hour of my blissful sleep is on the stroke, but I am still permitted to grant you hospitality for the short interval which I have yet to linger out in this vale of tears. Stranger, you are welcome in the cave of Oreb.'

"At these words, I recognised the venerable priest who had first led my family in the ways of the Lord. I prostrated myself before him; the holy man raised me from my lowly posture, and conducting

ting me into the cavern, invited me to partake of his humble fare, and put before me a few dried dates, and a cup of pure water. Our frugal meal being ended, the anchorite inquired what strange vicissitudes had brought me to his almost inaccessible retreat?

"After the recital of my deplorable history—'Ninus,' said he, 'your faults are doubtless of great magnitude, but there are no sins that cannot be washed away by penitential tears. Repose here awhile; to-morrow we will go and pray on the mountain, and there I will speak to you.'

"We conversed about half an hour more on the beauties of holiness. Oreb gave me precepts replete with grave meekness and benign wisdom, and invited me to join him in offering up a sacrifice of praise to the Most High. The prayers of the pious recluse were scarcely ended, when I fell into a sweet and profound sleep, which lasted uninterrupted until the close of day.

"As

" As soon as I awoke, the hermit said to me, 'Arise, my son, pray, and eat—we are going to the mountain.' I obeyed, and followed him out of the cave.

" We journeyed most of the night amidst steep and rugged paths, and at dawn we arrived on the top of Mount Colzim.

" An immense horizon extended around us: on the east rose the hallowed summits of Horeb and Sinai; the desert of Sur, and the Red Sea, stretched far to the south; towards the north lay the sterile plains where Pharaoh pursued the Hebrews; and to the west, beyond the sands where I had strayed, flourished the fruitful vale of Egypt.

" The holy man surveyed the sublime scene with reverential awe; then turning to me, said—

' We are here surrounded by the monuments of our divine faith: *here* the sacred laws were promulgated, *there* they were testified by miracles. You no more will

will wander from the paths of the just. Ah! my son, what would you seek now amongst men? Has the world any more charms to allure you to sin? Would you, like the impious Israelites, return to the abominations of the wicked, and lead the wanton dance round the golden image? No! a more worthy destiny awaits you. In the happy valley where once flourished the tree of life—in the fertile plains between the Tygris and the Euphrates, you will at last find repose; and, in the salutary bitterness of penitence, interrogate your own heart—there you will present to the Most High a sacrifice more acceptable than burnt-offerings—a contrite and humble spirit. It is now time that we should separate: you will find a guide at the foot of these rocks.'

"The hermit now gave me his blessing, and obliged me to leave him. Immersed in sad and serious meditation, I silently withdrew. At the base of the mountain I found a shepherd, who acceded

ceded to my request of conducting me to Arsinoe. I traversed part of Asia, and reached at length the end of my pilgrimage. I took up my abode in a cavern on the other side of the mountain. The produce of the chace has for some months supplied me with nourishment; if Heaven grants my prayer, I shall never quit this peaceful vale, happy to wear out the remainder of my days in the exercise of penitence, and, after my death, to rest in an unknown grave."

When Ninus had finished his recital, Elnathan regarded him for some moments in silence; he respected the candour with which he had avowed his errors, and admired his deep repentance.

"Young man," said he at length, "at some distance from hence, even on the summit of Mount Anoth, exists a temple, dedicated to the Most High. Naaman, full of years and virtues, there presides, and is ready to remit his soul into the hands of his Creator—thou mightst then like

like to succeed him in his august office of high priest. Given up to religion, thou mayst be useful to humanity, and thy prayers for thy fellow-creatures will ascend to Heaven with thy sighs of repentance."

Ninus rendered many thanks to Elnathan, and accepted his proposal. It was accordingly agreed that he should repair to Mount Anoth with the patriarchs, who would recommend him to Naaman.

Hopeless of being able to render their country farther benefit, Sophonius, Azer, and Aspar, quitted the service of the royalists, and retired next their parents. Some years had elapsed since the two former had beheld their beloved wives, Zara and Saba, who now hastened to the distance of ten parasangs from home to meet their husbands, whom they had almost despaired of ever again beholding. What was the joy that prevailed at this meeting may be easily supposed.

Elnathan, on the return of his sons, proposed

proposed to Sephora, to Zabdi, and Mara, even to his whole family, that they should accompany him to Mount Anoth, there to render thanks to Heaven for having watched over the safety of his sons, in the past dangers they had encountered for their king. His proposal was generally applauded, and accordingly a day was fixed for this holy pilgrimage.

Numbers of their neighbours contended for the privilege of attending the steps of the patriarchs, and many were the youths who offered to be the bearers of their litters, and those of their wives. A numerous procession did indeed encircle Elnathan and his kindred. Youths and virgins marched onward, and filled the air with hymns of gratitude, while their younger brethren strewed flowers, and consumed aromatic herbs along the path of their revered benefactors.

Naaman, bent to earth by the weight of years, yet proceeded the length of ten parasangs from his temple to greet the

the pious pilgrims, who presented him with rich offerings in his own behalf, and that of various classes of the indigent. He opened wide the temple, and concluded his religious performances by consecrating Ninus as his successor in the dignity of high priest.

The pilgrimage performed, Elnathan and his followers returned in the same order they had advanced, to the centre of their native village, where the sage, amidst a rural fête, which he had been careful to provide, solemnly gave the name of Abessalopolis to the rustic capital of his little domains.

It was but a few days after that our pilgrims were informed of the death of the good Naaman. His piety, resignation, and active charity, during a long series of years, rendered him at all times fit to join his Creator, who therefore vouchsafed not to warn him of the approach of death by a course of bodily suffering —he tranquilly expired in the arms of Ninus,

Ninus, even as the sun sunk with splendour unequalled behind the sacred mountain of Anoth—his last sigh was breathed to his beloved Martha, whose image had ever dwelt with him, next to that of his God.

Saaph and Mesron, content to have once more beheld Aspar return in safety beside them—also pleased to see him live in his offspring, now sighed only to mingle their spirits with those of Abessalom and Noëma, whose memories were so dear to them. Their sighs ascended to heaven; for presently were they attacked by a slow fever, which gradually consumed their aged forms, and within three months of each other relieved them from this earthly scene, which amidst its best enjoyments, is, by reason of unavoidable cares, and the longings of the soul to gain its primitive station, truly a wearisome exile.

Elnathan and Zabdi, with Sephora and Mara, no doubt felt the day gloomy that swept

swept from earth the companions of their youth—their firm and affectionate friends. Not even the prospect of quickly rejoining those we love can prevent our sighing for their departure. Our sages, however, and their amiable partners, found much to cheer them in the happiness of their numerous descendants; the frequent marriages that took place amongst them were so many periods of rejoicing, when the old men resigned themselves wholly to cheerfulness and conviviality.

Zabdi and Mara, as they approached their twentieth lustre, were no longer able to leave their dwelling—reclined on each others' arms, they sometimes gained the entrance, where, surrounded by their infantine descendants, they enjoyed the pure air and vivifying sunbeams. Mara at length became wholly stationary—Zabdi seldom quitted the side of her couch. One day, taking hold of her hand, his sight, now too dim to distinguish

guish her features, he felt it cold and motionless—" My dear Mara," said he sorrowfully, " am I indeed to survive thee ?"

" I go first," said she, " only that we may taste the joys of reunion—with impatience shall I wait thy coming !" Mara ceased to breathe.

The cares of Elnathan and Sephora were now directed to soothe and console Zabdi, whose disposition was ever of a less placid nature than that of his brother. Even at this advanced age, he required the encouraging voice of friendship to direct and establish his hopes. Impatience to regain his beloved Mara (whom he fancied every moment as stretching out her arms to receive him), hastened to exhaust his feeble powers; five months after her decease, he resigned his soul into the hands of his Creator, having first pressed to his heart Elnathan, Sephora, and Zara, and having bestowed a

tender

tender blessing on each of their descendants.

Funeral honours were successively rendered, with pomp and tenderness, to the remains of Zabdi and Mara; the whole colony of Abessalom and Noëma assumed for each of them, during a period of forty days, a mourning garb; every inhabitant of the canton offered prayers and alms upon their tomb. Elnathan thence frequently repaired, and with feelings of tender reverence, unmixed with weakness, there burned incense; while Sephora, supported by her daughters, or grand-daughters, offered a tribute to the cherished memory of her friends, by strewing their grave with the choicest flowers her garden could boast.

Elnathan, who still loved to seat himself on the turf, and amuse his great-grandchildren with some interesting fable, gathered from the past, at length completed

pleted his twentieth lustre. Both he and Sephora received from nature a constitution stronger than what had been the lot of Zabdi and Mara. Sephora truly had never known infirmity; and if on her husband some impression was made by the severity of winter, the opening spring was sure to bring for him a fresh store of health.

Their friends and neighbours almost flattered themselves that Heaven meant to leave on earth this sainted couple, as two visible images of that virtue, destined from the beginning of time to inhabit its bosom.

ELNATHAN;

OR,

THE AGES OF MAN.

BOOK XI.

BOOK XI.

Death.

O THOU! whom youth regards with an eye of terror and despair, and whose first approach saddens the greatest part of mankind, but with whom the sage delays not to become familiar, and to whose arms he at length with rapture resigns himself—O Death! how shall I efface from the heart of prejudiced mortals the unjust horror they entertain of thee! I will not surely solicit thee hastily to place me beneath thy peaceful shades, for thou and I, we are both subject to the will of Him who, where his wisdom seest best, will extend his hand, and

scatter poppies over the evils of my life. But I will bless in thee the power of the Almighty, who has established thy empire, to prepare man for true happiness. I will beseech thee to surround me with thy salutary warnings—at thy side will I drink of the pure and celestial vapours raised above thy trophies by the just, stripped of all impurity. O Death! what a destroyer art thou of vanity! how sublime is thy power! all here below is illusion and error, till thou offer light and truth. Thou art the minister of Heaven, to recompense virtue and chastise vice. Thou smilest on the good man, and leadest him to the everlasting society of those who on earth were worthy of his love and reverence—thou preparest for him felicity unperishable; while, for the voluntary sinner, thou renderest twofold the veil that intercepts his sight, then suddenly snappest the slender thread by which he was suspended above a dark and hollow abyss, destined to engulph

for

for ever his impious systems and guilty passions. O Dacians! after the Hebrews, the most favoured of nations, how sound was thy philosophy! you wept at the moment of man's birth, and you rejoiced when death withdrew him from our plains of ingratitude, falsehood, and affliction!

Elnathan and Sephora, destined to the glory and happiness of preserving their piety and judgment sound, even till their last sigh, had no sooner, within a short interval of each other, attained the age of an hundred, than they took more than usual pleasure in following to the tomb the corses of the Hebrews who expired in their neighbourhood, and even at other moments, in wandering amongst the receptacles of the dead, and decyphering the epitaphs that marked each tomb.

The mortal, yet led by his passions from the paths of virtue, can ill comprehend the pleasure that, though sad, is to be found in such scenes. The silence which there reigns, appears to exist be-

 tween

tween heaven and earth—it affects and subdues the soul, which soars through past ages, which interrogates its destiny, at the period when it shall no longer be encumbered with our mortal spoil. It is while contemplating the relics of humanity that we most despise all worldly things, and with most fervour fix our thoughts there, where no change cometh.

Although Elnathan and Sephora retained the use of every sense even till they had reached their hundredth year, yet it was not without much difficulty that they could trace the inscriptions on tomb-stones. The delightful city of Saron was the nearest town to the village of Abessalopolis, and was looked upon as the cradle of the first colony of Chaldeans, derived from Phaleg, in whose lifetime the earth was divided amongst various sects. It was celebrated for its monuments—the most beautiful of which were erected to distinguished persons of the last age. Elnathan and Sephora determined

termined to make one more journey while on earth, and view these famous tombs. They were attended only by two servants of each sex; for they rightly judged, that the spectacle they proposed to contemplate was of a nature hurtful for their children, since, by inspiring melancholy, it might repress their industry and useful ambition.

On their arrival at Saron, our travellers sought for Amnon, a former acquaintance and friend, to lead them to the catacombs, and point out to them what they contained most remarkable. The good man willingly led them to the sanctuary of death, and was eager to give them every information they might desire.

He first directs their attention to the tomb of an infant, who had died in its fourth year, and was the first fruit of a tender union between himself and an amiable woman, the first object of his love. The image of the child, engraved upon the tomb, presented a countenance

of angelic beauty—it appeared stretched upon a bed, its head supported by its afflicted mother—the angel of life stood on one side, that of death on the other; the first offered to him a cup, from which he turned aside his head, while his hand was extended towards death with an air of affectionate confidence, as if he was impatient to obtain, without farther contest, a celestial triumph. At the feet of the boy were the busts of one of his brothers, and three of his sisters, who followed him in their infancy, all of beauteous aspects, and all regarding him with an expression of hope and joy.

Not far removed was a monument, on which was sculptured a brother and sister, the former about the age of nineteen, the the latter of seventeen. They were both in a kneeling posture, and led the spectator to question the history of the mortals they represented. The youth had been inspired with an early and ardent love of arms and glory; his sister chaste, ever

ever tasted all the bitterness of unhappy love. These young persons were, besides, endowed with every grace of person and disposition; they conceived sentiments the most exalted, of friendship and of virtue, of which the age was susceptible—ill-humour was a stranger to them; effusions of tenderness and charity were ever ready to burst from their souls, and gladden all who surrounded them. The Almighty dreaded lest the wickedness of the age might alter the perfection of their natures—having therefore suffered them to fulfil the most sublime obligations of their religion, he sent an arrow that pierced them equally—on the same day it would have pursued its course, even to the hearts of their parents, had not a protecting angel interfered, that this pious couple might give to the world an example of resignation, in the midst of misfortune so extended.

The tomb that followed was placed in a retired position, as if purposely, and

 inspired

inspired Elnathan and Sephora with a lively curiosity, as to those who reposed within it. It was surmounted with a male and female statue, each erect, and with a dagger buried in their bosoms: they regarded each other with a tender and satisfied expression, even as they received the stroke of death.

"The young and lovely Sicera," said Amnon to his companions, "was born of honest parents, who traded within the town of Saron, and who acquired a considerable fortune by means the most correct. Within their dwelling arrived a youth, gifted with two very opposite talents, those of music and fencing—the latter a dangerous art, and but too much prized in Chaldea, even from remote periods. Manzer was, besides, distinguished by features the most regular, but which were rather marked by sternness. He, notwithstanding, possessed every power of pleasing, and attached to him but too firmly the heart of the ingenuous Sicera.

Her

Her parents, however, discovering that Manzer was the offspring of illicit love, and perceiving the mutual affection which encreased between him and their daughter, they requested of him to quit their house, nor farther to conceive hopes which, with their consent, could never be gratified.

" Manzer, ere he departed, failed not to communicate his grief thereupon to Sicera, and even to inspire her with the dread of his becoming a prey to death, were he prevented from making her his wife. The two lovers, during a whole year, left no means untried to induce the parents of Sicera to consent to their union, but in vain, since the law of Moses scarcely permitted the Israelites to connect their daughters with strangers, much less with those who were illegitimate. Manzer, perhaps excited by pride as well as love, became only more determined not to resign the heart of Sicera, and he obtained her sacred promise never

to

to enter the bands of Hymen with other than him—he bound himself to her by a like vow.

"At length, no hope remaining of his being able to change the resolution of her parents, and hearing besides that they proposed to their daughter various suitable matches, jealousy determined him to possess her by some means or other. Manzer joined Sicera in a private path, where they were accustomed to walk, without however for a moment forgetting what was due to delicacy.

'O beloved of my soul!' said he, 'it is not on earth then, the seat of slavery and injustice, that we can truly belong to each other—it is only in heaven that our mutual vows, even pronounced at the altar, can be finally ratified, and can produce for us the bliss we deserve. Have but the courage to come to-morrow night, attired in thy best apparel (as I shall be in mine), to the temple, towards the eastern extremity of the town; there

I will

I will arrange maters so, that after we have sworn eternal fidelity, we shall receive death, as if from the hands of Love, whose triumphs we shall taste in heaven.'

"Sicera shared the enthusiasm of her lover—she regarded the proposal as generous and divine; and, at the appointed hour, repaired to the temple which he had designed. Her long tresses floated on her shoulders, and were crowned with a wreath of myrtle and jasmine. A robe of dazzling white, ornamented with roses, enveloped her graceful form. Manzer was already arrived within the temple, having his ringlets also flowing, and his brows bound with olive leaves. His tunic too was white as the driven snow. On the last step of the altar were erected two cypress boughs—a beam reached from one to the other, to which, at each end, were attached two daggers; a ribbon was fastened to them, and it was so contrived, that the string drawn equally at the same moment by Manzer and Sicera,

cera, should precipitate a poniard into each of their bosoms, so deep as to bring instantaneous death.

"Sicera regarded without emotion these preparations, and even studied unmoved the means which were to plunge her and her lover into eternity.

"Their vows are formally exchanged, they consider themselves united—then pressing each other in a mutual embrace, the next moment they pull the fatal cord, and both fall bathed in blood upon the steps of the altar. A letter found in the girdle of Manzer, and addressed in a haughty style to the parents of Sicera, informed them of the previous determination of their daughter and him, to seek happiness in heaven."

"Death then," said Elnathan, "is less dreadful for some than the privation of an object in which centres their vain desires! Let us however hope, that the insanity which governs them, and which was excited by an impulse so amiable as love,

love, may plead in their behalf before the Almighty! But let us hasten from this monument."

A sentiment yet purer, and not less lively, was recorded on the next tomb, which rose in front of that of Sicera and Manzer, and nearly concealed it.

Two lovers of equal birth were destined, beneath the auspices of honour and their parents, to sacrifice at the temple of Hymen. The contract was already registered in the civil court, and in the course of eight days it was to be ratified by the high priest of Saron. In the mean time, the intended bridegroom set out for his country-seat, where he was to remain two days, to arrange matters for the arrival of his bride, whom he was to conduct thither when they had received the sacred benediction. But, alas! what a shock awaits the lover, when, having concluded every necessary preparation, he returns to Saron to join his mistress—with anguish inexpressible he learns, that

the

the very evening of his departure she breathed her last, and was even then laid in the tomb! Stupified by despair, he sheds no tear, he breathes no sigh, but, nearly motionless, waits for the approach of night. Beneath her friendly veil, he approaches the spot where is laid the remains of her who was to have been the arbiter of all his earthly happiness; he strips her sepulchre, raises her in his arms, presses her clay-cold lips, and having addressed to Heaven a prayer in her behalf and his own, expires by her side. He had but unclosed the tomb to admit his own entrance.

"This monument," said Amnon, pointing to another, "belongs to a woman who was universally admired for the beauty of her person and the gentleness of her manners. She was married to a man every way repugnant to her, and was thence led to encourage the advances of a lover congenial to her taste, and who breathed for her an ardent passion:

Virtue,

Virtue, however, though she was led astray from her path, was ever dear to her—so dear that she could not survive their eternal separation. She languished, and at length resigned her cares to earth.

"Greater and more worthy," said Amnon, "will perhaps appear to you another woman, whose relics repose yonder, and whose epitaph was traced by two of her sons (I am the youngest of the two,) after the admirable picture drawn by Solomon of a virtuous woman. She possessed every grace and talent of her own sex, and even many of those which belong to ours. She was, above all, remarkable for her courage and piety. Overtaken in the prime of life by a painful malady, and feeling her end approach, she blessed her children, and then summoned to her her husband, who had ever possessed her undivided love— "See," said she to him, in a humbled tone, "what ravages are visible in those features, which formerly captivated you

—disease

—disease and approaching death are there but too strongly marked. Alas! my love! all terrestrial good is destined to vanish—nothing on earth is substantial but true piety. I have loved you tenderly and solely; this, however, is not to prevent you, after my decease, from forming new ties—I would even recommend you to do so—neglect not, however, the five pledges which I leave you of our mutual happiness; cherish them always, I beseech thee . . . . . . and now farewell! What, you weep,' added she, with a stern look, 'while truly you should rejoice in my fate: am I not summoned by my God? Retire, and be ashamed of thy weakness!' And in a few hours after she expired, calm and collected, though her sufferings to the last were acute."

"And what relics here repose?" said Elnathan, pointing to another receptacle.—"They once belonged," replied Amnon, "to one of the most pious of our

our priests. After having a few years before passed beyond sea with a band of worthy Chaldeans (whom devotion to their legitimate sovereign led from their native land), and whose courage he constantly supported, he at length returned with them, in the hope of seeing re-established, by the interference of foreign powers, the monarchy and the religion of which he was the minister. Betrayed, however, equally with his companions, by the perfidious advances of the new republicans, or perhaps by the secret manœuvres of the prime minister of Persia, they beheld themselves, soon after their return home, surrounded by a horde of ferocious soldiers, and thrown into prison, from whence they hourly expected to be conducted to the scaffold. At this time an opportunity was offered to their holy guide to escape singly—'God forbid,' said he, 'that I should abandon my brave countrymen and companions, at a moment when my presence may afford them

them superior consolation; no, I willingly share their fate!' and truly he remained, to encourage their resignation and fortitude, previous to the period (which shortly arrived) of their being dragged to punishment. He even cheerfully resigned his last breath in the midst of them."

Amnon advanced with his friends, and stopped before the tomb of one, who, from the station of a humble cenobite, became a sovereign prince. Still was his whole life consecrated to the exercise of piety, virtue, and learning; and if power possessed for him any charms, it was in granting him the means of softening the afflictions of others. His benevolence was particularly exercised towards the unfortunate Chaldeans, driven from their country during the commencement of its disasters; their misfortunes taught him strictly to guard his own domains from the contagion of impiety and licentiousness, which was infecting

fecting the dominions of his neighbours. His precautions gained him many enemies, on whom he looked down with a noble contempt, ever content in the approbation of his own conscience. Laid within the tomb, his subjects bore general testimony to his many virtues, and his unerring justice; they were careful to have engraved on his monument two sentences, which were the basis of his conduct—*Blessed be the name of God, at all times and in all places! Can we ever be too good?*

"Look," said Amnon, "to what next offers—the sepulchre of a man who widely differed from him whom we have just considered of. He who here reposes was one of the first nobles of the empire; it is even suspected that he had greater right to the throne of Chaldea than Nebuchadnezzar. His illustrious family had sunk into extreme indigence, from his obstinacy in not renouncing pretensions which the lapse of time, and assured possession

session in the person of another, rendered almost chimerical. Behold," continued Amnon, "the figure which surmounts the tomb—it represents this ambitious personage as on his deathbed, attended by his two sons, whom in his last moments he thus addressed—'I pray you, my children, to reflect well on the miserable consequences that have followed my attachment to a vain title. I am on the point of drawing my last breath, even in an hospital, to which only the wretched gain admittance. It is even my wish that, instead of walking in my traces, you presently hasten and formally resign (upon the advantageous conditions already offered me) those pretensions which have exposed me to want, misery, and general desertion.'—'Ah! my father, most willingly,' replied the youths. 'We have no desire to be distinguished amongst men but by probity and wisdom—but by those virtues which, notwithstanding your ambitious views, have marked

marked thy progress through life.'—
'Thy words, my children, rejoice me; had they been of a contrary import, and shewn a determination to struggle on earth for power, I had resolved to exert my remaining strength to plunge a poniard into each of thy bosoms, as the only means of securing to thee tranquillity!'—This accounts," said Amnon, "for the daggers you see placed by the statuary in the hands of the old man."

Elnathan and Sephora had nearly made the circuit of the sanctuary, but Amnon still led their attention to two other tombs near its entrance. "The first of these," said he, "belonged to a good and plain man, who had grown old in the military service, and who, eight days before his death, visited me. 'I have heard,' said he, 'that you were an obliging and honest man. Let me therefore tell you, that I am now come to take refuge during the few days I have yet to live in one of your charitable institu-

tions, and will at the same time deliver to you the little wealth which I have been able to accumulate during a long course of sacrifices to my country. You will employ the tenth part of it to inter my remains with decency; and the remainder, I pray you, to remit with care to my orphan daughter, who is under the care of one of my brothers in the village of Sia, just twelve parasangs from Babylon.'—' But,' my worthy friend,' said I, ' your health appears good—you must not apprehend your death so near.'—' It is too true,' replied the old man; ' a few days will certainly end my existence.'—' Surely you have not intended to shorten your life by poison?'—' Oh Heavens! think you that I, who have so often rushed into danger to obey my king, would commit an act so cowardly, and so in opposition to the will of God? ah! no; yet am I penetrated with the conviction of surviving on earth not more than eight days at farthest. Farewell then.'

—And

—And in truth," said Amnon, "the good man entered the hospital of Saron, which is admirably calculated to afford relief to the sick and weary: there, before the expiration of eight days, he really drew his last breath, as he had predicted, affording an example of courage and piety. You may suppose with what exactitude I fulfilled his requests."

"The warning of that respectable man," said Elnathan, "certainly came from heaven; yet one might almost be tempted to think that he had borrowed the example to be met with in one of the isles of Greece, whose inhabitants conceive that arrived at their twelfth lustre, they should no longer usurp on earth a place, which they are unable to fill with advantage—yea, the day on which each mortal here reaches his sixtieth year, is considered by him as a festival, on which he assembles his friends, binds his brows with olive, and tastes of a poisoned cup,

which sinks him insensibly into an eternal sleep! Ah, the unfortunate! horror will strike him on awaking from this sleep; for he will become conscious that, had he reached my age, there would all along have remained to him some means of serving his fellow-creatures, and of rendering himself acceptable to God."

The last tomb to be considered where our travellers now stood, in presenting a frightful example of suicide, was also calculated to awaken the parental sensibility which had animated the bosoms of Elnathan and Sephora from the first years of their marriage. Raised above a slab of black marble, which closed the tomb, was to be seen the statue of a young man, whose countenance betrayed the contrast of firmness and tender sorrow, and who was in the act of plunging a dagger in his bosom, even as his looks were turned to a young maiden, whose aspect was expressive of innocence and beauty. Amnon, in directing the attention of his

friends

friends to the mingled expression of fortitude and tenderness, so ably displayed in the whole air of the statue, said, "Nothing can be more affecting than the history of the unhappy youth whose ashes yonder marble protects. With learning the most profound, a person the most attractive, and expectations of wealth, he entertained a passion for an amiable object, with whom he had been brought up, and who had been the companion of his early pleasures. Arrived at an age when he was entitled to choose his future destiny, he dwelt with rapture on the idea of an immediate union with his adored Niva. Unfortunately his father, though in other respects estimable, was more than commonly avaricious. Wealth was his god, nor would he suffer the slightest contradiction to his views in this particular. He frowned sternly on the choice of his son, and even became so outrageous when he was farther solicited to approve his passion, that Felimar had

the less to regret in obeying the order he received, to remove from the scenes which had given him birth, and where his mistress, with no other dowry than her beauty and virtue, passed a life obscure in the eyes of the world, but bright in those of wisdom.

"At a distance, Felimar yet attempted, but in vain, to soften his obdurate parent. At length, wearied with the constant refusals he met, and his love for Niva becoming daily more invincible, he wrote to his father these words—'My father, either your consent to my marriage, or my immediate death!' His father still obstinately refused to comply with his wishes, but sent him word, that he would presently hasten to conduct him home. Felimar, who knew no limits to his despair, took a position from whence he could observe the approach of his father. No sooner did he appear in sight, than the unhappy youth drew forth a dagger, and, tenderly regarding the picture of

his

his mistress, pierced himself to the heart. The author of his being appeared next him, only to perceive the sad effects of his inflexibility.

"There yet remains to you," said Amnon to the travellers, as they turned aside from the last sad picture, to quit the abode of death, "to view the tombs of two other famous personages, which, however, are not to be found in the common inclosure, since the ashes they contain belong to two mortals who formed a class completely different from human nature in general. Follow me along yonder path towards the right, even till you reach the pyramid which terminates it."

Elnathan and Sephora complied—the pyramid was of the finest jasper, and elevated above a sepulchre, on the side of which, fronting the walk they had just trod, was sculptured in bas relievo the figure of a man, enveloped in a mantle, which reached to his feet, while his head

was covered by a cap, such as is worn by the Arminians. His countenance was expressive of care, and even ill-humour. "He whose cold relics here repose," said Amnon, "(if indeed death has had power to extinguish the corrosive flame that spread through them during life,) was one of the most celebrated personages during the reign of Evilmerodac, and the one who has drawn towards him opinions the most opposite, even to the present day. Born in the little republic of Andros, famous for having been one of the chief promoters of the Chaldean revolution (though the son of a tradesman), also partly a philosopher, he received from nature an activity of soul, a strength of thought and expression, hitherto unknown. His youth was spent in the humbler walks of life, but his genius failed not afterwards to raise him to an equality with the greatest men of the age. He might be compared to one of those wondrous comets, which having for a long

a long space performed its evolutions round distant and inferior orbs, at length bursts upon our sight, and, as it skims through the heavens, leaves behind it tracks of light, that strike the soul with fear and admiration. This extraordinary man could unveil the policy of all the nations of the earth, could dive into the secret recesses of the human heart, could paint, in colours most seducing, the delights of love, the raptures which harmony has power to awaken. He feared not ridicule, and controverted the tastes and prejudices of every class of society. He dealt in paradoxes, which, wielded by his strong and daring hand, became two-edged weapons, with which he cut the strongest knots of truth, even such as had been respected through a series of ages. Having attracted, as he most desired, the attention of half the world, and in fact his reason having become dazzled by the illusions which he employed to gain universal homage, he grew proud, vain, and

unjust. His pride and injustice even arrived to such a pitch, that he became tenacious of every human being who approached him—in every man he beheld an enemy, while in fact he disputed with his own shadow. I am one," added Amnon, " amongst the numerous others, who experienced his black ingratitude. Having learned that he was the most miserable of men, and generally abandoned, I, in concert with a party of benevolent citizens, repaired to offer him an asylum, it being impossible for him to obtain one elsewhere. Notwithstanding, he had the cruelty and absurdity (for subsequent facts sufficiently proved his mistake,) to record in the history of his life (a production perhaps the strangest that ever was traced), that I had made him the offer of a retreat—a retreat which he sought even in a city of Greece, amongst honest citizens, only to betray him into the power of a government irritated against him, and to expose him to the rude attacks

tacks of uncivilized neighbours. Previous to his death, however, he retracted many of his errors. At the approach of his last hour, he retired to one of the most beautiful gardens of Chaldea, close to where he lived, and bending his knees before the Almighty, confessed his sins amidst a torrent of tears—it is to be hoped they were forgiven him!

"In order to examine the other tomb," said Amnon, "of which I have made mention, and which is the one most anxiously sought by travellers, we must descend some steps into a vault, where it is placed exactly beneath the one we have just examined. This tomb, no doubt, contains the ashes of a man to be admired for his talents, but dreaded for his vices."

A flambeau was prepared to descend into the aforesaid cemetery; it was confided to a servant of Elnathan's, while Amnon offered an arm to each of his friends to assist their descent. The tomb

at length appeared; it was of black marble, scattered with stars bright as gold, and stained here and there as if with blood; it was surmounted with the statue of a man, holding in his hand a book, the two open pages of which recorded the names of several great princes calumniated by his pen, and of many sovereigns whose subjects he had encouraged to revolt.

"This statue," said Amnon, "represents the son of one not ignobly born, who pompously called himself the friend of mankind—proving himself at the same time a bad husband, a tyrannical father, and even an indifferent citizen. The first fruit of his marriage, whose remains sleep within this sepulchre, was impregnated, even from his mother's womb, with the seed of every tempestuous passion. The first use he made of his talents (of an order the most singular) was to create discord between his parents. From thence he became the declared enemy of

all

all recognised authority: he affected to despise honours, though he ever sought to mount to the top of Fortune's wheel. With a tone of voice the most unpleasant, he filled the air with rapid explosions of eloquence. At other times, he traced so clearly the route of justice, and scattered his wit so judiciously, that he was able to please, even where he could not convince. The first object of his political works was to overthrow every prejudice of society, and to set himself up as an object of idolatry. Who, however, would believe it!—this mortal so to be dreaded, sometimes exhibited traits of excessive goodness, and he would jest with the simplicity and innocence of childhood. He was capable, at intervals, of honouring true merit, and of obliging the unfortunate: his conversation, besides, was the most captivating. With a character so inconsistent, the factious could easily foretell that it would be no difficult matter to abase him from the

point

point of exaltation, which he alone knew first how to gain; and that he would serve as a convenient scaffolding by which they might build their execrable authority. In fact, after being looked up to as a god by the promoters of rebellion, he in the end became for them an object so detestable, that the care and ingenuity of a sister he had much loved was necessary to shield his remains from the outrages of the populace, their minions. A woman, with whom he had continued in unlawful intercourse, and whom he had rendered jealous, followed him into a rural retreat he had chosen, and by her reproaches and extravagancies, so irritated his already anguished system, that a fever the same day seized him, and causing him to return to Babylon, in four days put an end to his existence. It is necessary to add, that, notwithstanding his carelessness about futurity, his end was mild and dignified: he betrayed much interest for many who had served and even loved

him,

him, and expressed much anxiety for the happiness of his country, although he had been among the chief promoters of its misfortunes. He at least made some distinction between the human and brute creation, by adopting some preparation for death: he washed his face, perfumed his head, and at length breathed his last sigh, without any emotion of weakness or anxiety."

"We have now seen here, oh wise and amiable guide!" said Elnathan, "beneath thy enlightened auspices, all that can furnish subject of useful meditation, all that can inspire lively repentance, love unbounded towards our heavenly Father, and all which can teach us to contemn the vanities of the world. We will then hasten to lay the picture before our descendants. Receive therefore our warmest thanks, and our sincere wishes, virtuous Amnon, for thy prosperity. We shall return home penetrated with gratitude towards you, and with new veneration

neration for death, which we have seen adorned with such famous trophies—death equitable ever, and whose power should be dear to the good man, as it is formidable to the wicked."

Amnon with regret parted from his illustrious friends, whom he had known at Babylon, when they acted a part so honourable to themselves and mankind. Yet fearing that they might still regret their approaching separation from earth, he, ere they departed, requested of them to cast a last look towards a kind of barrier, consisting of a slab of white marble, which was placed at the entrance of the cypress walk, which led to the funereal sanctuary. Elnathan and Sephora turned immediately towards the object he pointed to, and on it read these words, engraved in letters of gold—

"Thou didst weep upon entering on life, why then let death afflict thee?"

"Farewell! venerated Elnathan and Sephora," was Amnon content to add; after

after which he retired from their presence.

The travellers, aided by their faithful domestics, delayed not to regain the litters which were to transport them home. On the last day of their journey, and some miles from their native village, they were met by their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who were impatient beyond measure to behold them once more in safety, though this venerable couple had been absent but nine days. It was who amongst the youthful band should first clasp their knees—who first imprint kisses on their hands. The satisfaction of Elnathan and Sephora may well be conceived. At their age, a meeting like this produced the same charm for them, as if in their younger days they had been restored, after several years absence, to what was most dear to them.

It must now be observed, that they reaped every possible advantage from their journey to Saron. In familiarizing them

them with death, it rendered them but the more willing to submit to its dominion. "Amnon," said they with one voice, "needed not to have directed our attention to the inscription at the entrance of the burying-ground—it is only the wicked man, or the deist, who should fear death; for us it has no terrors."

Elnathan and [illegible]hora conversed daily of their approaching end, with the same composure as they would during their youth of an intended journey from Babylon to their native home. Oh conscience! how mortals are rewarded even on earth for listening to thy dictates!

Elnathan, who ever loved to weave some interesting relation with his discourse, on whatever subject it might be, one day in particular conversing in the midst of his family on his favourite topic of the tomb—added, "It happened at Argos, at the time when my dear Zabdi and I sojourned in Greece, under the auspices of Callophilus and Aristea, that two

two men of distinguished merit were said to have sacrificed within the temple of Juno, and to have asked of the goddess to grant to them the benefit she thought would render them happiest: upon which they were overtaken by a deep sleep, which ended in death. I have often thought that this might indeed well have happened to them, had they been well acquainted with the true worship, and had they solicited the particular favour of the Almighty."

Elnathan and Sephora, after returning to their vale of peace, yet enjoyed six months of earthly happiness, in the respectful and tender attentions of their descendants. A last trait of prudence and kindness within this period, yet did honour to the character of Sephora.

From the period that Aspar returned from the army of the royal brothers and other princes of the blood of Belshazzar, he had more than ever felt affliction for the loss of his beloved Theena. He languished

guished daily; for, accustomed besides to the exercise of arms, he found but little to amuse him in rural toil. If he found any dissipation for his cares, it was in pursuing the chace.

One day, having given himself up to it with more than usual ardour, he at length came to a little wood, which in one spot terminated the former possessions of Abessalom and Noëma; passing through it, he found himself on the summit of a hill, which looked over an extensive plain: he here contemplated with lively regret the air of barrenness and depopulation which the late disasters had so generally induced throughout the country, when he perceived at the foot of the hill, and towards the right, an humble habitation, which peeped from behind a tuft of trees. Curiosity and fatigue led his steps thither: he found within the cottage, which was neat but simple, an old woman, who was engaged in baking some cakes. "Are you indeed quite alone," said

said Aspar, "without neighbours of any sort that I can perceive? how can you, in this case, provide for your subsistence, or even contrive to pass your time?"

"Ah, noble Sir," replied the matron, who beneath a rustic garb betrayed no mean origin, "profound retirement has many charms for one who laments a beloved husband, and whose cares are claimed for an only daughter."

"Have you been long deprived of your husband?" continued Aspar.

"Alas! four years since he was brought to the scaffold, for having, at a little distance from hence, lamented the fate of our good king. A prey to the deepest despair, I was with him a few moments before his death, and would even have mounted with him the scaffold, had he not, by the most moving supplications, and at length by commands, induced me to provide for my safety within this cottage, where we had both hoped to end our days. 'Heaven bless you, my beloved!'

were

were the last words of my husband; 'as also our daughter, and the good Nadab; put your trust, all of you, in Providence, and no doubt we shall be allowed to meet again!' Here then do I continue to live with my daughter; we both exist by the labour of our hands, and with the assistance of a little flock, which Scila takes care to feed on the southern side of the hill; on that which is opposite, we cultivate a little wheat and maize."

"But," replied Aspar, "may I ask who is Nadab, of whom your husband spoke so warmly?"

"Ah!" said the venerable matron, "he is the orphan son of one of our oldest friends, who, nineteen years ago, ere he breathed his last, and even before our daughter was born, confided him, an infant, to our tenderest care, his mother having died in giving him birth. He was to us as a son, and for many years he shared with my husband his profits as a vintner: we loved him so much, as to look

look forward with pleasure to his one day becoming the husband of our daughter. Nadab was in despair for the cruel fate of his adopted father, and he therefore resolved to join the army of the royalists, and take revenge upon the government for his death. Tenderly attached to Scila, he hoped besides, with the aid of his heroism, to raise his fortune, and thus be enabled to make her his wife. It is now four years since his departure, nor have we heard aught of him, except that he enlisted under a general named Osias, and who was, it is said, a brave and skilful warrior. Alas! I fear that our dear Nadab is either no more, or that his projects of advancement have proved truly unsuccessful."

"I am well acquainted with Osias," said Aspar, "and will endeavour to obtain from him some account of Nadab."

At this moment Scila appeared, having just inclosed her flock within the fold: she seemed not only surprised, but

pleased,

pleased, to hear her mother engaged in friendly converse with a stranger—a stranger too of prepossessing mien, as was Aspar. Beauty and innocence adorned the brow of Scila. She waited not for the suggestions of her mother, but, in a tone of simplicity and kindness, invited Aspar to partake of the refreshments their humble dwelling could afford. He hesitated not; and still continuing to solicit the confidence of his aged friend and her daughter, partook of a repast from which he derived more pleasure than he had perhaps ever done from the sumptuous banquets of the great at Babylon, since innocence and sincerity there presided.

Singularly interested in his amiable hostesses, he at length prepared to take his leave, and put into the hand of Scila a piece of gold coin, as a recompence for the hospitality he had met with. Scila instantly returned the money—"We have not only learned," said she, "from the precepts of my father, but from the impulse

impulse of our own hearts, to accept no reward for the hospitality we are happy enough to have it in our power to dispense; we have besides, courteous stranger, been amply rewarded by the wisdom and kindness of thy discourse."

Aspar, thus encouraged, requested permission to repeat his visit—a permission that was most readily granted. Before his final departure, he even made an agreement with his venerable hostess, by which she should suffer him (without her being in the least a loser) to fix his station often within her dwelling, the neighbourhood of it furnishing excellent field for the chace. "Yes," said he, "beneath the auspices of beauty and virtue I cannot fail of success."

Aspar deposited his bow and quiver in a corner of the cottage, as a pledge of his quick return, and took the road to Abessalopolis, a distance of eight parasangs, and where he arrived two hours after sunset. He related with enthusiasm

to Elnathan and Sephora, as also to Sophonius, Azêr, and their wives, the unexpected discovery he had made, and freely confessed to them, that for many years back he had not spent so agreeable and interesting a day.

His former languor now gradually disappeared, and he thought only of the cottage of Scila and her mother. Now frequently, at break of day, he left his native home, to transport himself thither, charged with game, or some acceptable present, for his new friends. Night too often surprised him within their peaceful abode, where, reclined on a couch truly rustic, he tasted of delicious repose. Upon his arrival, Scila would hasten to quench his thirst with a cup of choicest milk; she would bathe his feet, and administer to him every comfort within her power; while her mother prepared an excellent supper of wild-fowl, and vegetables the produce of her little garden.

Aspar,

Aspar, considerably past his prime, wished not to remember the pretensions of Nadab; for he began to behold in Scila the object which could best replace Theena in his heart. For Scila and her mother, they began to regard him as a protector and friend—a friend sent from Heaven to cheer their solitude, and banish from their remembrance the gloomy events of the past. Thus stood affairs, when one fine evening in autumn, as sitting on a mossy bank without their dwelling, and listening to the discourse of Aspar, who amused them with relations of other climes, they were surprised to see a man approach on horseback, and in full speed. He advanced still nearer, and at length alighted at their feet—immediately they met the glad embraces of Nadab. "Heaven be praised," said he, "I see thee well! behold here a talent of gold, presented me by my generous commander Osias, who, returning me hearty thanks for my efforts

to revenge the memory of our king, granted me also, a few days since, permission to quit the service, and repair to marry the amiable shepherdess, whom he knew had so long occupied my heart. Oh! thou, who so long fulfilled to me the place of a mother, wilt thou not consent to the same? and thou Scila, whom I behold a thousand times fairer than when I left thee, refuse not for a husband, him whose tenderness for thee knew no abatement amidst combats the most perilous."

"No, she will not refuse thee," said the good woman; "thou shalt be twice over my son. Here too is a worthy friend, who will share our happiness, and who will even act as a father to Scila."

Aspar no doubt graciously saluted Nadab, and promised to lend every assistance to complete his happiness; but, alas! disappointment was at his heart. No longer must he dream of love and

Scila

Scila—he must even return to his uninteresting existence.

His couch within the dwelling of his two friends was this night resigned to Nadab, while he returned beneath the roof of Elnathan, to whom he recounted the unexpected termination of his adventure. "Oh venerated friend and parent," said he, "I rather suspect that thine was the care to remit to Nadab the talent of gold, and thus invite him home, to assume his just rights, which were in danger of being usurped."

"Thou art mistaken, my son," replied Elnathan; "the talent of gold was presented by Osias entirely without my knowledge." Sephora now spoke—"You are both too just," said she, "not to pardon me this little act of secrecy. I it was who for the last time employed my pen to write to Osias for the dismission of Nadab, at the same time that I transmitted to him the talent of gold. Aspar, my chief design was to prevent thee from

 attaching

attaching thyself farther to the mistress of another, which must have prepared for thee endless regret. Scila, too, had she even been free, how disproportioned were her years to thine!"

"Thanks, a thousand thanks, dear mother of my beloved Theena; without thy interference, I might indeed have lived to regret my injustice. I might—Heaven only knows how far an unruly passion might have carried me—as it is, Nadab is happy enough to find the lovely Scila pure and innocent as he left her. Never shall I cease, amiable Sephora, to bless thy protecting hand—thou hast perhaps saved my old age from care and remorse."

Soon after this singular occurrence, Elnathan and Sephora felt themselves sensibly decline; their understanding failed them not, but their limbs denied the usual support, and their sight refused to distinguish the objects that passed before them. At this period they learned the death of their contemporary and friend,

friend, the prophet Daniel; and were also informed of the archangel Gabriel having previously appeared, to announce to him the future coming of the Saviour of mankind, and to command him to word it in writing. Elnathan and Sephora, therefore, believed that they could not better honour the memory of their friend, than by permitting their young descendants by turns to read for them his book of prophecies, while they pointed out to them how many of his predictions were already fulfilled.

Indeed, they continued to listen and comment upon the Scriptures, even when no longer able to sit erect: they reposed continually on their couches, which were drawn close together.

At length the morning arrived, when the sun arising with greater splendour than usual, Elnathan, stretching out his hand to Sephora, said, "My beloved companion, behold those bright beams; they are sent to cheer the last day of my existence!"

existence!"—"And of mine also, adored Elnathan!" replied Sephora, pressing fervently the hand of her husband. "Thrice blessed be Heaven," added she, "since it gives me no hopes of surviving thee!"

The different members of their family presently appeared, and each received a last and fervent blessing from this sainted couple. "My dear children," said they, laying their hands on their heads, "love God, love one another, love your fellow-creatures always!"

Elnathan and Sephora, though glorying in the prospect of approaching their Creator, were overcome by this tender ceremony; they sunk into slumber—slumber that was at length interrupted by the cries of a new-born babe. They raised themselves up for the last time, and a granddaughter of Aspar and Theena, who had newly drawn breath, was presented to them. Thus did they behold the commencement of the fifth genera-

tion,

tion, even on the day when Elnathan completed his hundredth and first year.

The sun was now in his decline—every earthly wish fulfilled, Sephora felt the cold touch of death press heavy: she raised her eyes, her heart to heaven, clasped the hand of Elnathan, and softly breathed her last sigh! At this instant, the senses of her husband became clouded—he continued to breathe, but the separation from his Sephora was not felt. His children watched in awful silence beside his couch. As the sun shed his parting gleam, they were convinced his spirit had left vacant its terrestrial dwelling! Oh! glorious and peaceful end of the faithful and virtuous!!

ELNATHAN;

OR,

THE AGES OF MAN.

BOOK XII.

BOOK XII.

Eternity.

SOPHONIUS closed the eyes of his parents—tears coursed each other down his cheeks, and he kept his looks still rivetted on the pale forms of Elnathan and Sephora, even until night enveloped every object in his sable garb. Sleep then crept over the harassed senses of Sophonius, and transported him to heaven's gates, where an angel of extraordinary beauty and strength announced the presence of the Divinity to crowds of souls, who, stripped of their terrestrial garb, waited in awful dread the sentence which would destine them either to dwell for ever

with

with their Creator, or be repulsed from his remunerating favour.

Sophonius, overjoyed not to have lost sight of his parents, still shuddered on considering that momentous crisis, which was to fix the immutable destiny of the wicked and virtuous—when suddenly the barriers of heaven were unclosed, and its interior displayed to his astonished sight. There is suspended the throne of the Most High, formed of jasper and precious stones, brilliant beyond what the imagination can conceive. Delicious gardens extend at its foot, and are watered by four crystal streams, whose source are lost in space infinite. The tree of life flourishes on an eminence, while, at a little distance from it, the tree of knowledge extends its deep roots and numberless branches; beneath its golden foliage are concealed the secrets of heaven, the hidden laws of nature, truths moral and intellectual, and the immutable principles of good and evil. The

first

first parents of mankind repair and shed tears beneath this wondrous tree.

The light which illumines this happy region appears, to the eye of Sophonius, as composed of the orient blush of morn, the risen lustre of day, and purple tint of eve. No star decks the firmament, no sun seems to rise or set there—where nothing commences, nothing ends—but a soft light pervades the whole, even as a refreshing dew. Within this sainted abode are dispersed cherubims, seraphims, angels, and archangels, whose care is to minister to the will of the Most High. Some direct the elements, others lead the seasons and their change; one ripens the harvest, protects the opening flower; another bends to earth the hollow tree. Sophonius also recognises, in these celestial genii, the spirits whose sighs re-echo through the forest, whose murmurs mingle with the waves of the sea.

What a moment for Sophonius, when

a scene

a scene like this bursts upon his sight! It is the moment too when the Angel of Immortality hastens to place on the brows of Elnathan and Sephora diadems of purest gold; while from the throne of wisdom issues a voice, whose sounds re-echo through the vaulted space—it exclaims, "Ye who fulfilled on earth the least of my wishes, Elnathan and Sephora, dwell with me for ever; yea, thy souls are free to partake of my omnipotence, to plunge into the source inexhaustible of my favour; no thirst of pleasure shalt thou know; the unalterable felicity allotted to celestial spirits shall be thine, untinctured with the dread of satiety. You may, with the rapidity of lightning, soar through the innumerable spheres scattered beneath my feet, loiter in safety through their verdant lawns, and taste of the delicious fruits they boast. Thine will be the employment to join the celestial choir, and repeat my name, the pledge of thy mutual happiness. Nor

will

will ye be denied, Elnathan and Sephora, the supreme enjoyment of mingling thy intercourse with those who, following my dictates, were dearest to thee on earth."

The Almighty spoke, and Sophonius beheld, treading on the footsteps of his parents, Abessalom and Noëma, with a group of cherished friends. Amidst the sacred procession, Sophonius distinguished the shade of Belshazzar, and that of his calumniated queen, of his heroic sister, and interesting son. He hears them implore the clemency of Heaven for the monsters who had completed their punishment on earth; but the Almighty Judge refuses to invert the order of strict justice; and their cruel murderers, as they appear at the gates of heaven, are precipitated into a profound abyss—an abyss dreadful to consider!

It is displayed to the terrified glance of Sophonius, who there beholds frightful caverns, where the impious enemies

of God, and his divine worship, taste of endless misery. Within these flaming gulphs, the miser beholds infernal spirits liquify that gold which was the object of his idolatry; from their hands he swallows it burning, for ever demanding more. Here the proud man exerts convulsive movements to soar on high, while a spirit of darkness is ready, with contempt and violence, to render vain his efforts, and chain him to earth. Here serpents wind round the heart of the envious, and pour their corrosive venom into the wounds they inflict. In these abodes of horror, the voluptuary, tormented by his depraved appetites, precipitates himself towards objects of disgust, who in transports of fury revenge his attacks. Here the effeminate glutton, whose palate was his divinity, hastes to seek delicacies, and finds only poison. A little farther, and the mortal accessible to rage and anger, and who continually cherished within his breast a revengeful fury,

fury, sees those darts he aimed at his fellow-creatures changed into sharp poniards, that pierce his own bosom. It is even in this abode of trouble and anguish that death presents itself in a menacing form, and brings terror and affright to the sinner, without completing its end.

Sophonius, overcome by the view of misery so complicated, fell prostrate, his face to the earth, exclaiming—"Oh ye dwellers in heaven! Oh my father! Oh my mother! is it indeed possible that thou canst taste unmixed felicity, while scenes so horrible are presented to thee?"

At this moment a celestial spirit approached Sophonius, encouraged him to arise, and touching his eye-lids with the extremity of his downy pinion, restored activity to his sight.

"Thou born of woman," said he, "extend thy glance towards the base of the throne, the seat of wisdom and goodness supreme; observe the veil which is there attached, which drops over the infernal regions,

regions, so that the enemies of God, which there dwell, are never permitted to meet the view of his saints. Remark also, the Angel of Forgetfulness, which watches beside this veil, and who is careful, by the agitation of his dazzling pinions, to dispel the vapours which might even thence penetrate, and reaching the shades of the just, recall the evil they contended with, and which drew punishment. Behold also, prostrate at the foot of the Most High, the Angel of Repentance, who weeps the errors of human nature, when they have been unable to annihilate all love for the Creator, all dread of his wrath, in the bosom of those who have been seduced into their path—numerous are the spirits that hover round this celestial minion, and who solicit his intercession with the Almighty in their behalf. To most of them is his grace manifested through the Angel of Forgetfulness, whose gracious smiles betray success.

"Cast thy last glance, oh Sophonius! towards

towards the immense space which is situated beneath the throne, towards the left —there dwell the spirits of the wise and virtuous, inhabitants of the terrestrial and other spheres, who, endowed with thought and feeling by their supreme Author, shewed themselves his grateful worshippers, but who were unable to extend their virtue and wisdom equally with those favoured by revelation. Descended from nations or individuals, whose crimes dishonoured their celestial origin, it had not been just for God to manifest himself to them in all his glory, or that they should have been entitled to equal felicity with the children of the just, or with those mortals who, enlightened by the voice of God, combated as martyrs in his cause. They enjoy, notwithstanding, peace and pleasure, within asylums of secondary beauty: they are allowed the charm of communicating with their former friends; an intercourse is even permitted them with some of the celestial choir, for God,

ever

ever just and beneficent, thought not of punishing them for their ignorance of his sublime laws.

"But when the promised Liberator of the guilty race of Adam shall have descended from the celestial regions, to consummate his remunerating sacrifice, the iron sceptre of hell shall be broken, its barriers overturned, and the heavens shall appear unveiled, for the souls of the truly virtuous, even for many who are now allowed but a partial glimpse of its glories. When ages shall have passed away, their mortal spoil, snatched from the dust of the tomb, shall be animated by the voice of the Most High; shining with glory ineffable, they shall enter triumphant the mansions of eternity — then shall time be no more, and eternal and unchangeable felicity be the portion of virtue, attested by perseverance, or purified by repentance.

"Oh Sophonius! during thy mortal career, render thyself worthy of making

only

only one with thy Creator at the end of time!" Thus spoke the angel, and disappeared.

Sophonius immediately extended his arms towards the shadows of Elnathan and Sephora; but, although he received from them lingering looks of tenderness, they escaped him even as the breeze, or as a delicious dream vanishing from before the attentive mind. At length, celestial melody hastened the conclusion of his vision, and Sophonius awoke while singing the following hymn—

"With the dew of heaven may virtue descend amidst mortals! May the earth open wide its bosom, and bring forth hereafter the seed of redemption!"

THE END.

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